VOYEUR BOY 2

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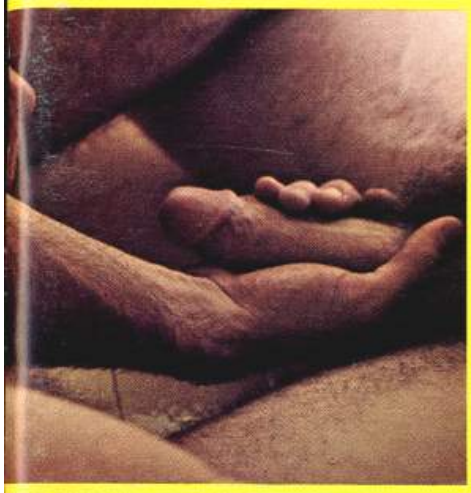
A PICTORIAL and LITERARY STUDY



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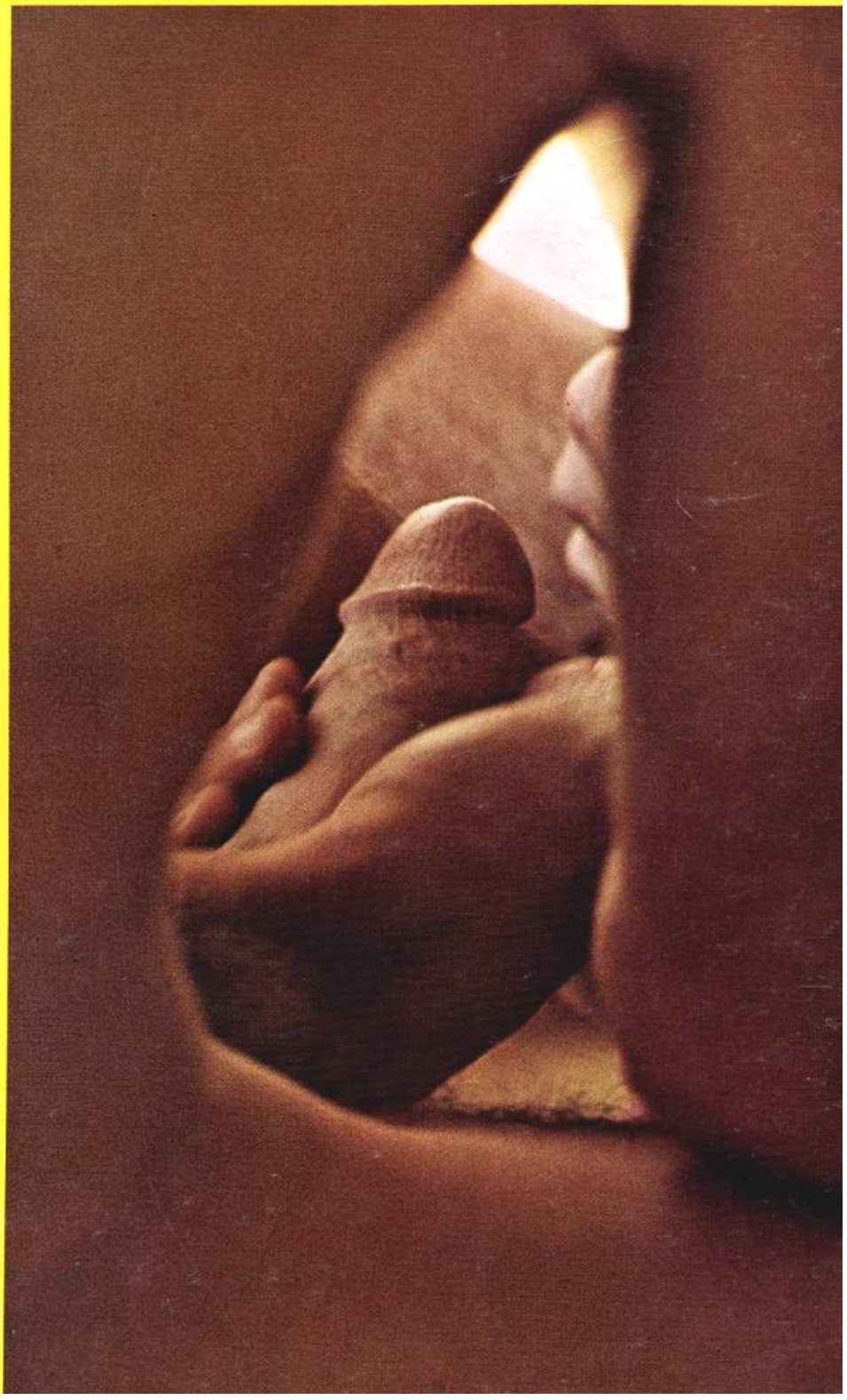

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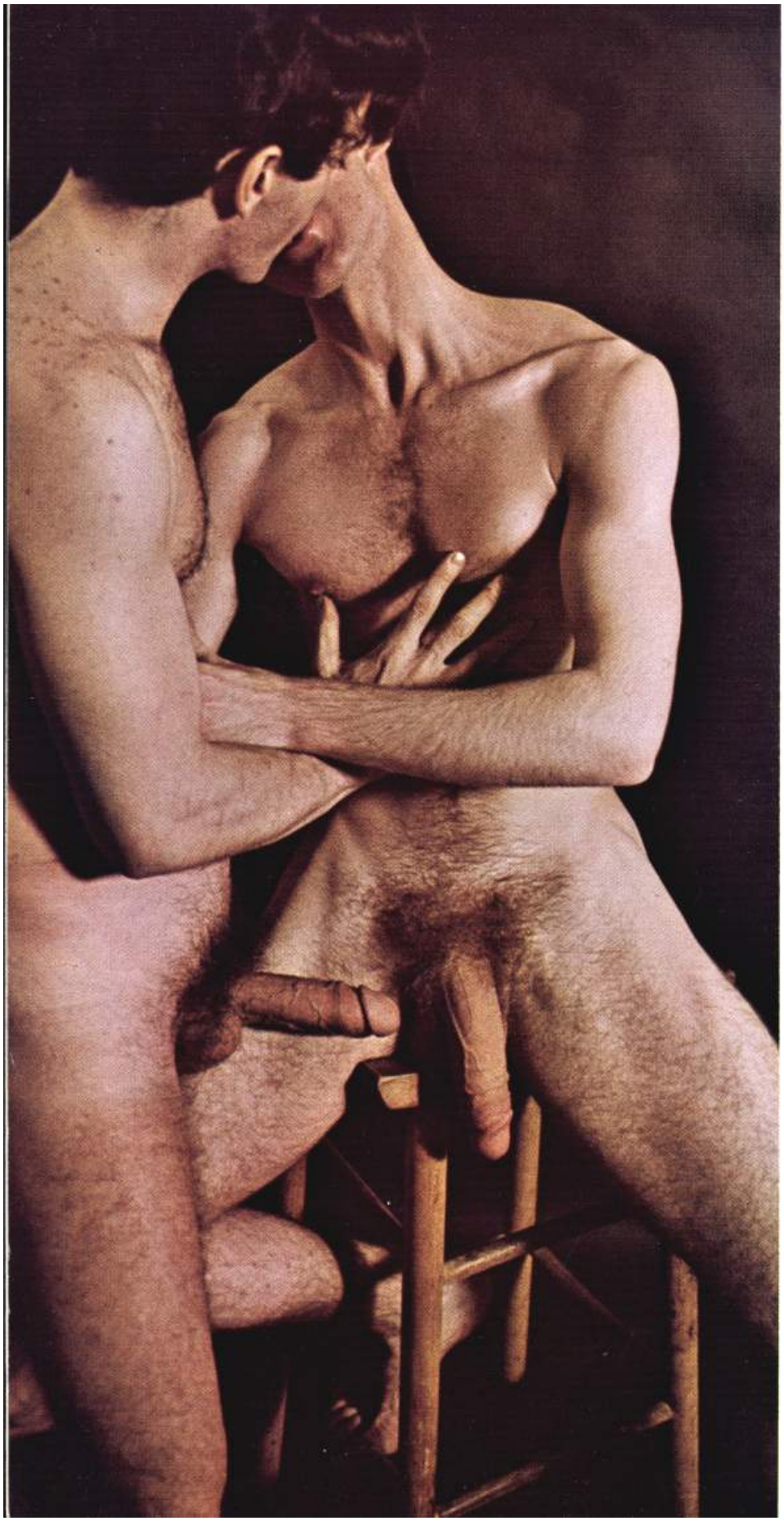
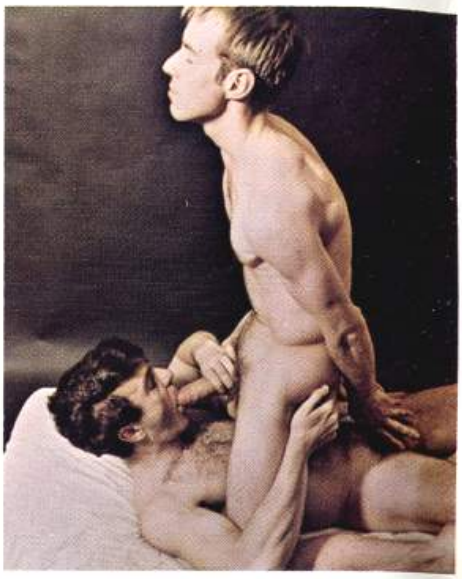
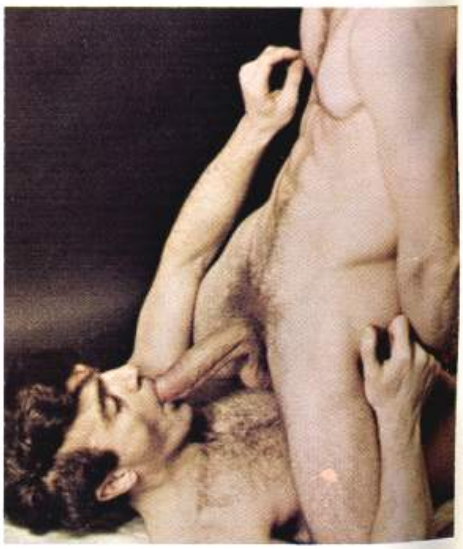
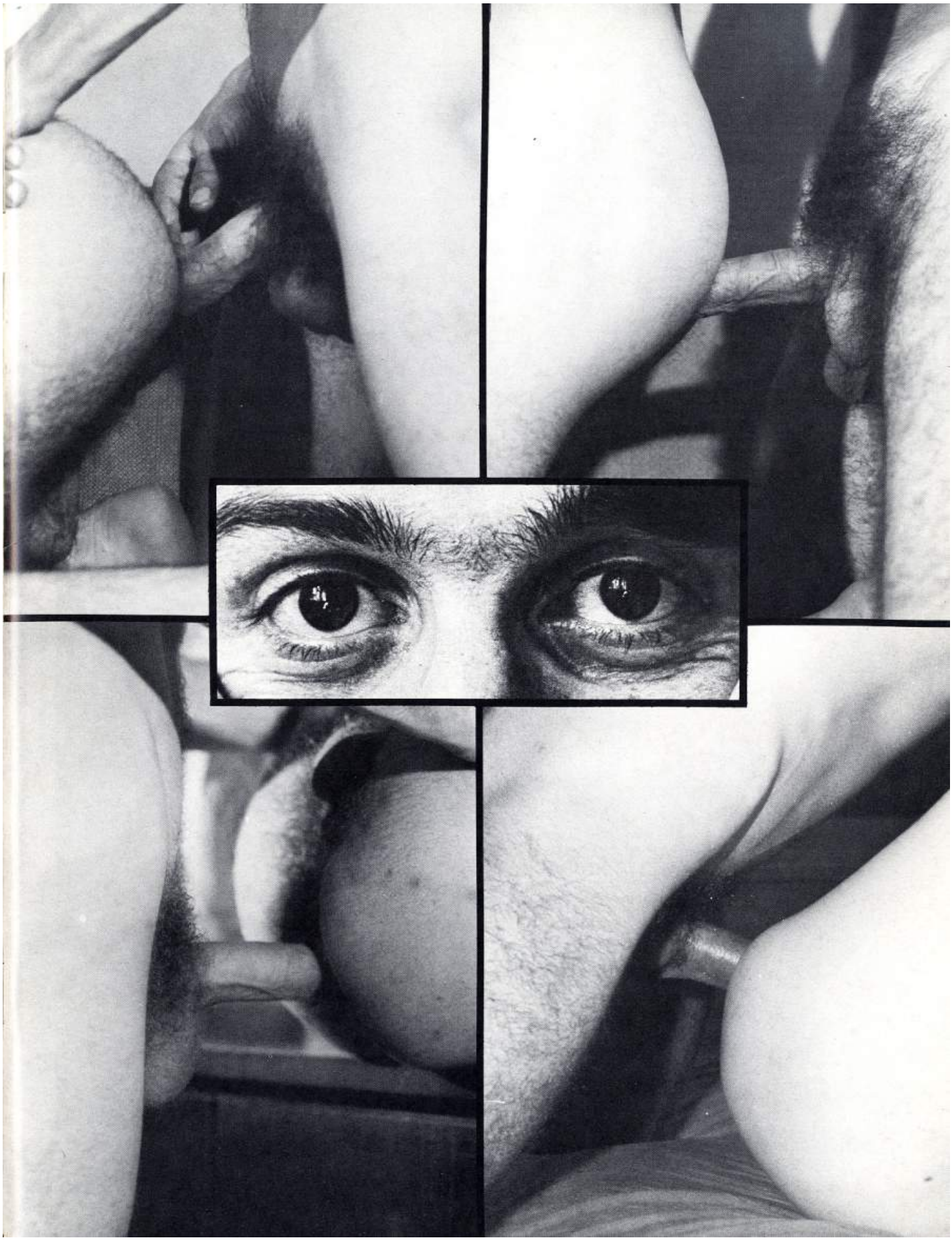








VOYEURISM

by Jack Muller, M.D.

The term *Voyeurism* is used to describe those allegedly rare and allegedly perverted cases of persons who derive sexual pleasure from peeking at other persons' nudity or sexual activity. The word,. which comes from the French for "one who sees" (which would give it the same meaning as *seer* or *visionary)* and which is strangely absent from a great many English-language dictionaries, is one of those pernicious pseudo-medical concepts that has entered heavily into the law of most states, and "Peeping (or Peeking) Tom Laws" can carry a heavy penalty, both in terms of actual legal penalties and in terms of the total destruction of individual reputations.

Such laws, even more than the laws against, say, homosexual acts, can only be considered as examples of scapegoating, a reenactment of the primitive Hebrew custom of choosing a goat on which the entire community symbolically "loads its sins and guilts" and then chasing that goat out into the wilderness.

For nothing is clearer than the fact that all persons derive visual erotic pleasure from seeing nudity, partial nudity, and particularly the sexual organs and acts.

Yet the Abramic triad of religions (Judaism and its offspring, Christianity and Islam) place a severe taboo on such pleasure, and the fourth major Abramic religion, Psychoanalysis, has further codified that taboo by declaring what Freud half denied, that sex exists solely for procreation, and that any sexual expression that is not immediately and directly coital is a perversion.

Thus everyone in our society faces a peculiar contradiction: the desire to look, the fun of seeing, what Radclyffe Hall called "the hunger of the eyes," is a universal human trait, but in our society such looking is highly tabooed. Everybody wants to look, and most are, most of the time, afraid to look. Therefore the penalties are especially high on the person caught looking.

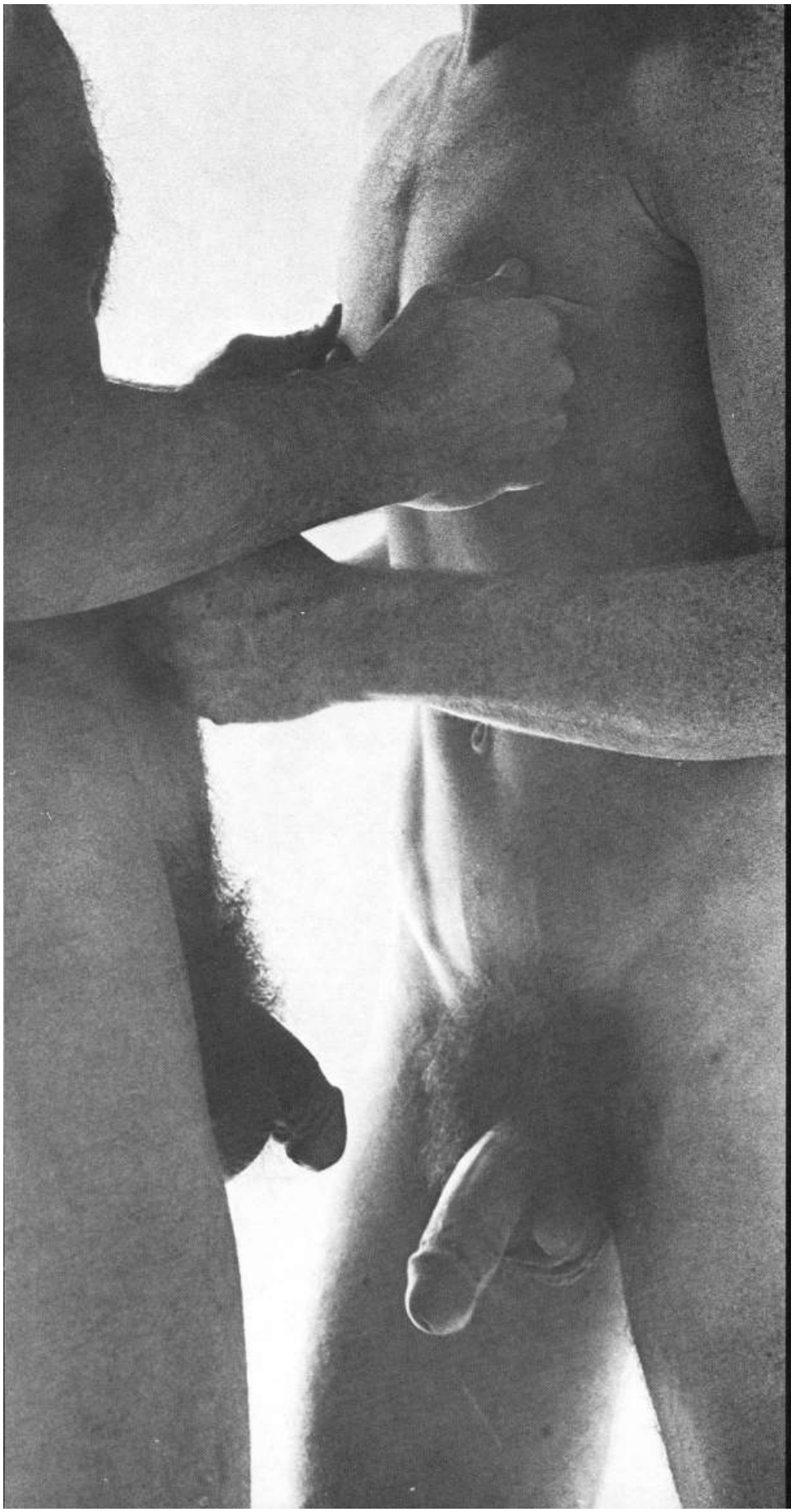
Peeping is generally assumed to be a particularly male vice and there is good reason for that in the economic roots of sexism. Women

began very early to be considered private property, in Western society. And Jesus summed up the old Judaic law in this respect: to look with lust at another man's wife (property) was the moral equivalent of raping (stealing) her. Radical Christians may argue that Jesus meant this ban to hold only so long as people remained tied to the "property" notions of human relationship, and that liberation or salvation wiped away both such relationships and their attendant offenses ("there is no marrying nor giving in marriage in heaven"), but the fact is that most Christians have taken his prohibition literally, placing an even stronger taboo on looking on a woman who is somebody else's property than the ancient Hebrews did.

And looking that way at another man, or his "private parts," is a sin of a different color, even though the comparing of parts has always been a popular if guilt-ridden male pastime.

The more popular synonym for "Voyeur" comes from an Anglo-Saxon legend: a certain Lady Godiva so objected to the harsh rule and heavy taxation her own husband laid on the people of Coventry that she rode a horse through the town, while completely naked (though most artists, wishing to display her nudity and to cover it at the same time, have depicted her with a very discreet hairstyle which covered all embarrassing points). This was such a great infraction of sexual and property taboos that word went out that every citizen must shutter his windows tightly and not peep, but one tailor named Tom did peep, and has been immortalized, though in his own lifetime, his penalty was somewhat more severe, and overshadowed the original point of the story, which was Lady Godiva's novel and liberated protest against her husband's tyranny.

Another synonym, more or less, is the term *scoptophilia,* which the few writers who bother with, or seem to have heard of that term, distinguish from voyeurism in a rather uncertain way, one writer saying that the first term refers to



looking at genitals and the other looking at nudity, and the next writer reversing that.

Frank Caprio, a writer whose morbid works were loaded with the tone of voyeurism, put it most simply: "Scoptophilia is an anomaly of sexual life in which the person obtains pleasure from looking at that which is capable of producing in him a state of erotic stimulation."

Other psychologists, sexologists and legislators will haggle on whether voyeurism is involved only when the person observed has failed to consent to being observed, or on whether looking leads by definition to erection or masturbation.

Thus, many would say that it is not voyeurism (but it may be scoptophilia—not nearly so nasty, though it sounds worse) to watch a nude dancer in a bar like Goliath's or to be stimulated by the sight of other nudes in a bath, unless they don't know you're looking at them, or they don't wish to be looked at, as when a guy drops his towel accidentally, and you steal a look before he can cover "his shame"—or else (and this gets back to the property aspect of the whole concept) when he uncovers himself for one person and a third person sees what he wasn't intended to see, and gets all stirred up.

Stag films get at the heart of this "how-many-angels-can-dance-on-the-pinhead?" semantics: since the actors know, in most cases, that they are being filmed and that the films will be watched by many other persons, then, technically, watching such films is not voyeurism. But since the viewer imagines that he is watching, not a film of two actors fucking or only pretending to fuck, but two guys who don't know that he's watching them, then the viewing is an act of voyeurism—providing that I have accurately described what is really in the individual viewer's mind, and that would be a hard thing to prove in court.

It doesn't matter too much, because there are separate laws covering allegedly obscene films, but they are based on the same concept, that it is theft, immorality

and perversion to steal a look at that which one ought not see, and even worse to derive sexual stimulation from looking.

Traditionally, as we have already indicated, voyeurism was considered almost solely a vice of heterosexual men. The taboo reaches its pinnacle of assininity in countries like the Islamic lands where women who are either virgin or married are kept shut up in their houses, and may only venture forth on the street heavily veiled. Even in their houses they could only be guarded by men who were appropriately neuter, whether by operation or by inclination.

But in the Nineteenth Century, the pompous scientism of German "sexologists" led to an elaboration of classification, as they made a vain effort to label all the varied and supposedly perverted forms of human sexual expression, so that each, appropriately pickled, bottled, labeled, and shelved, could be available to any "therapist" who might devise a new form of treatment for such "disorders" and "degenerations" of the sexual function.

It is of course this "functionalist" or instrumental approach, with its assumption that the entire range of erotic and interpersonal relationship is reducible to a technique for babymaking, and that solely, that has robbed sexuality of its varied levels of fun, or spirituality, or human relatedness, or of contest and gamesmanship, and has reduced the sexual/erotic partners to no more than instruments.

But homosexuality, or the Gay impulse, which means a bit more than that, is not instrumental. Freed from the instrumentalism of babymaking, it liberates two or more (the limitation to two partners is part of the instrumental hangup) partners to take pleasure in one another, to explore one another, to have intercourse in the fullest sense of that term.

A Bit of History

Anthropologists noticed some time ago that societies differ, in the so-called primitive stage, between shame and guilt cultures.

All societies seem to taboo certain things, and the difference lies in whether one is made to feel ashamed of having been caught breaking a taboo, or in whether the reaction is internalized in a private sense of guilt for an infraction that no one else may be aware of.

The God of the Hebrews was the first Peeping Tom (though several of the Greek Gods did their bit, and it's a little pointless trying to argue which God came first). He made man to look like himself, and he took pleasure in looking at him–unclothed. Then he made woman, and he got a bang out of looking at her also. Only when that snake came in with his infernal apple did Adam and Eve realize that they were naked, and hide from the old peeper, who soon came around again for another good look-see. And when he did cover them up, because they were ashamed, not guilty, he didn't use more than a figleaf or two on each of them, so there was still a lot of skin showing, at least by late Victorian standards.

It was only later that the Hebrews learned "to know in their hearts" when they had done wrong (the apple juice took a long time having its effect) and became a guilt culture, leaving us today with a mixed culture in which some people can be terribly upset because they know in their hearts that they've done something terribly wrong, while other people are only concerned if their neighbors know about their peccadillos.

Voyeurism, as a legal entity, is where guilt and shame meet. Everyone who is at all affected by the force of the old taboos, has the desire to peek now and then, and some actual experience with peeking, and feels some degree of guilt about this desire. So society scapegoats an occasional individual who is caught in the bushes out-

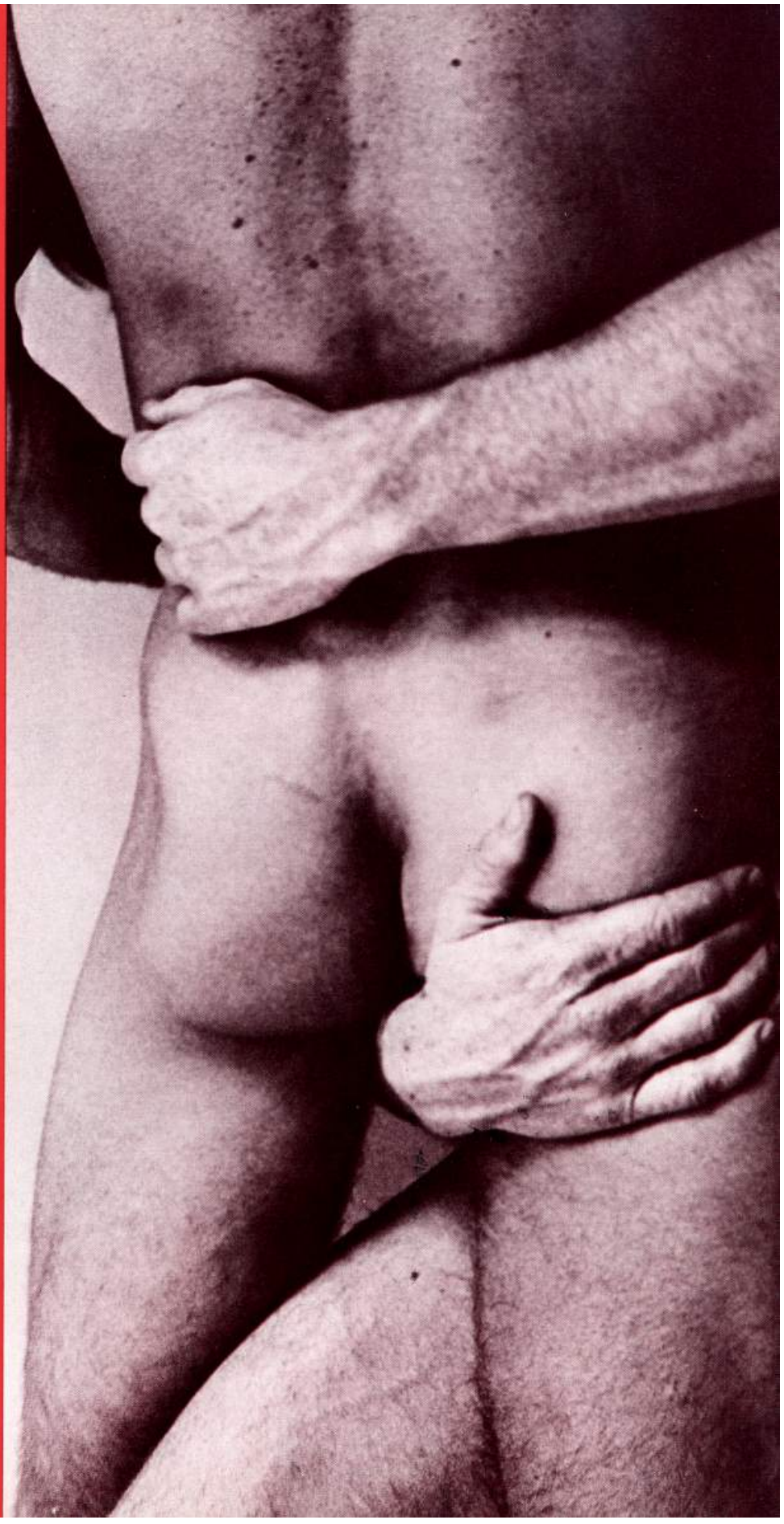
side a lady's window, watching her undress, or worse, watching her husband hump her. And thus the poor scapegoat carries away the psychological burden of all our guilt.

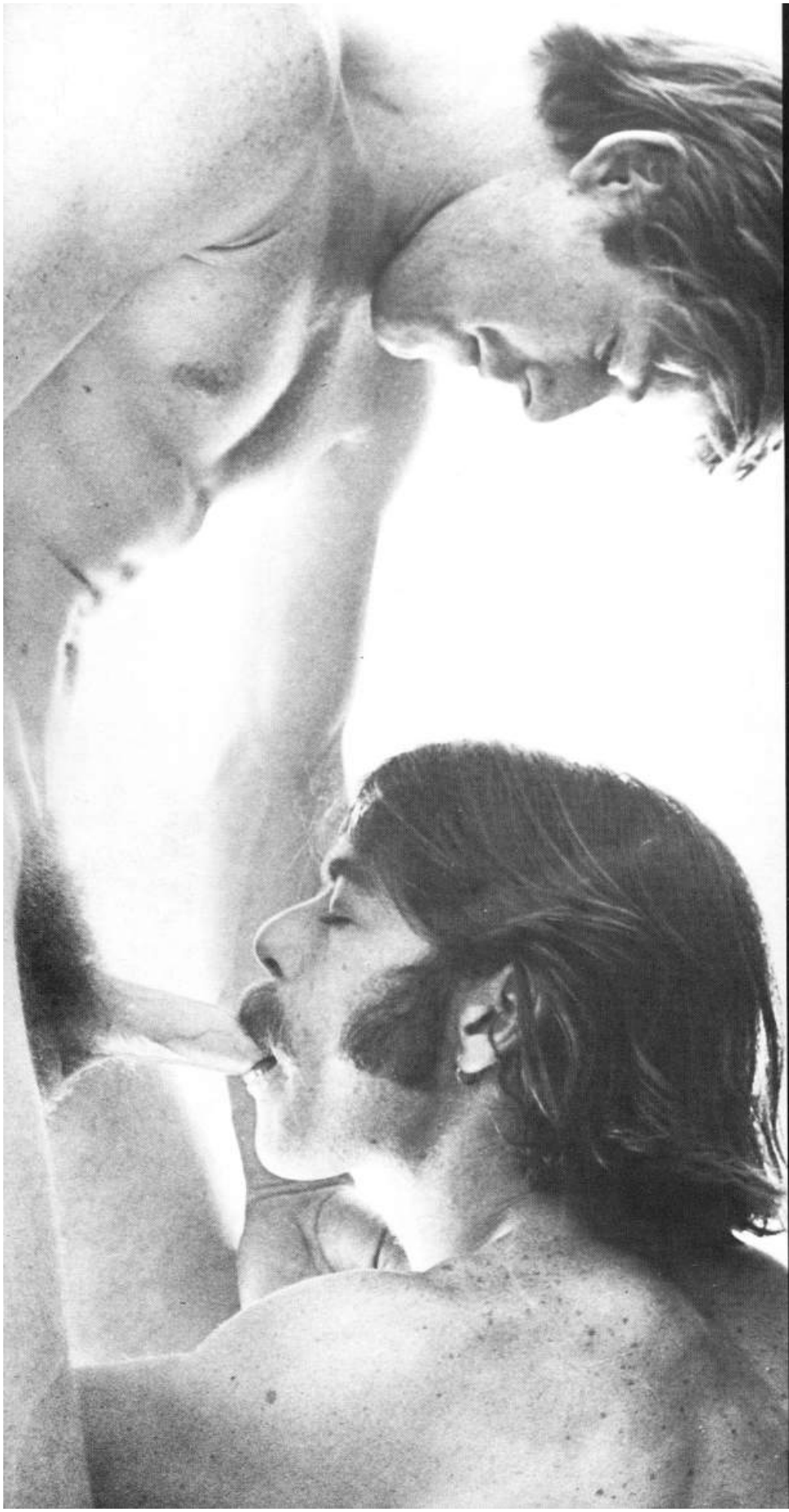
The very concept of voyeurism can only occur in a society where nudity is forbidden, or where sexual activity is kept hidden. There have been many societies and still are, despite erosion by the missionary effort, where people are not ashamed of their bodies or their functions. Where the body is openly displayed and where even sex may be out in plain view, there can be no offense of voyeurism, unless other acts (sometimes eating) are considered as things that must be done in private, except as to special ceremonials that some people are forbidden to see.

Total nudity seems to be a concept that the ancient Greeks were converted to by their philosophy—the notion of bodily perfection, or excellence, in contests. Visually enjoying the human body, fully undraped, fully exerted, was a way of worshipping the Gods, in whose image man was made. Indeed, the Gods themselves were visualized and sculpted in idealized human form, and, in the classical period, rarely draped, with the male form held in higher esteem than the female.

But the concept of voyeurism was not unknown to the Greeks—or at least to the post-classic Greeks. A fair share of the surviving verses of Greek poets of the Hellenistic period refer to stealing a glance at some pre-pubescent boy's hidden charms, and on rare occasion, some of them even peeked at girls or women.

The Romans were from the start more puritanical, and it was only with a sense of snickering and debauchery that they adopted the Greek habits without the Greek ideals. And at the same time, religious currents began to flow into the Roman world of the dualist religions, the view that the body and the soul are alien to one another, the soul pure and the body corrupt. It was the dualist form of Christianity that destroyed the classic world and its





values, that began its relentless drive to flagellate the body, to cover it up, to pile both guilt and shame on top of all bodily functions and to reduce all sexual or erotic expression to the minimal, babymaking, function.

This is not to say that all Christians have believed the body to be shameful. Many have taken a matter-of-fact approach, not only to heterosexual sex, but even to the "variations." But puritanism has been the chief current, and the rule has been, "If thine eye offend thee (i.e., if you see something you shouldn't) pluck it out."

We may suspect that this rule, a part of Jesus' mystic teaching, whose meaning was not apparent on the surface, has been misunderstood, for he clearly stated that we are "defiled" by what we do, not by what we see or eat.

Most of the sex laws were written by Puritan legislators, sometimes advised by psychologists who were often Puritans in disguise. Even the liberal psychologists often felt that while "perverts" ought not be persecuted, they were (and remain) fair game for anyone who wants to try out a new technique for restraint, electroshock, conditioned reflex therapy, castration, aversion therapy, and all the range of scientific inventiveness worthy of those Jewish doctors who escaped similar treatment for themselves in the Nazi camps.

But we live today in a society that is increasingly accepting Jeremy Bentham's rule (without trying to go into his tedious mathematics) that what is good is not determined by what the Bible says, or what psychologists or legislators say, but simply by what provides the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

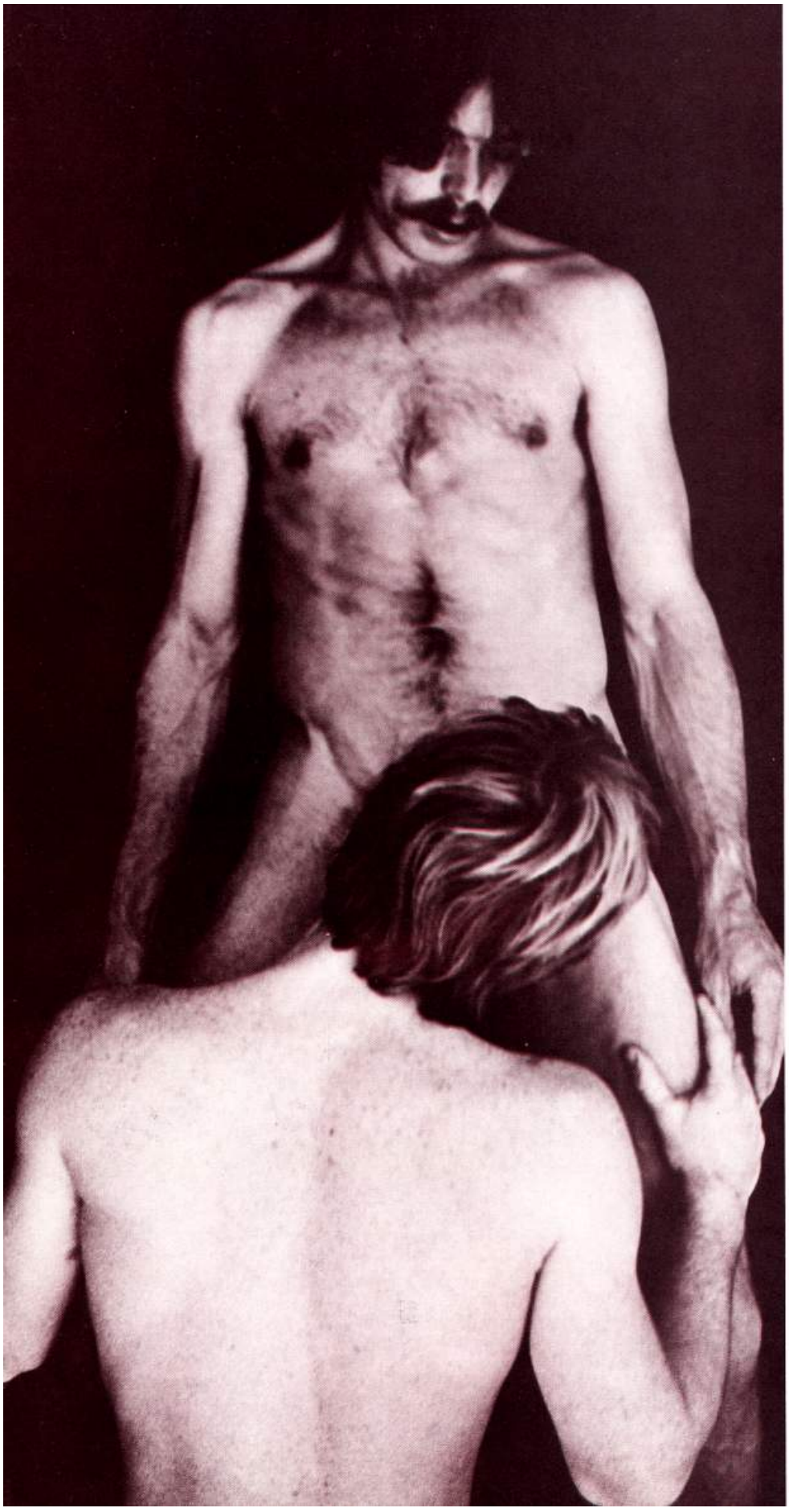
Believing that pleasure (and the absence of pain or discomfort) is the only meaningful standard of good, the moral value of acts, Bentham taught, could only be determined by judging whether they would give a person pleasure without later pain, or without giving a greater burden of pain to others. The bookkeeping can get

fairly complicated, but the general idea is becoming more widespread.

The French philosopher, Rene Guyon, who was long the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Siam, best summed it up:

"There are no sexual aberrations. There are only differences of procedure, cunningly combined according to individual variations of taste, together with preferences for particular persons or classes of persons; and that is all. . . .

"It is wrong to suppose that ordinary coitus is the only normal mode of sexual satisfaction: it is the only normal mode of repro-



duction, but that is quite a different thing.

"Every mechanistic means of producing sexual pleasure is normal and legitimate. . . ."

We would have to add, parenthetically, that even Guyon's statement that "coitus . . . is the only normal mode of reproduction," applies, so far as we know to the human species, but not to all others. Rabbits and frogs sometimes reproduce by parthenogenesis. One-celled creatures reproduce by mitosis and sometimes by female homosexual unions. Snails, being hermaphroditic, reproduce by a bisexual 69. And for that matter, even humans now sometimes reproduce by artificial insemination.

The Yoke of the Law

Peeping Tom statutes vary widely from state to state (and formerly also from community to community, when local option prevailed in such ordinances) so that in some jurisdictions they might cover those who were watching a nude dancer or a pornographic film, while in others the law in this area limited itself to "secretly peeking into a room occupied by a woman."

The classic sexologist and psychological casebooks are filled with cases of men who compulsively would find ways, often quite inventive, to peek under women's skirts (how about mirrors mounted on one's shoetips?), but I am impressed not so much with the "pathology" of the victims of these drives as with the pathology of the learned doctors who described their peccadillos in such tones of horror.

Yet the authorities are fairly well agreed on one thing: whether the voyeur or Peeping Tom or scoptophiliac is in fact a pervert, a case of pathology, a criminal or a sinner, *he is not dangerous.*

I have twice known women who have reported that they saw a man lurking outside their window, peeking at them when they were nude, and aside from the probability that one case was imaginary, my answer still stands: "If you don't wish to be seen in the nude.

don't undress in front of an open window."

It is in the nature of things that peekers are harmless. And while it is clear that a woman cannot always tell at a safe distance the difference between a mere peeker and a potential rapist, the punishment of voyeurism as if it were a serious offense is itself criminal.

I was at a Gay Liberation dance, in a dormitory on a Southern California campus recently. The dancers, in front of a large open window, and overflowing onto a balcony, attracted voyeurs aplenty. All night people were sneaking looks from the windows of most facing apartments, and often from behind the curtains, and I doubt that there would have been fewer watchers had there been more to see. Seeing handsome young men dance together is enough to stir the voyeuristic impulse in many heterosexuals. I am not sure what the result would have been if some of the dancers had been liberated enough to shed their clothes, in plain sight of the neighbors.

But it was a simple social function, a dance, not an orgy. It is peculiar that anything done by persons plainly announced to be homosexual is considered sexual, and therefore a subject for voyeurism. At 22nd and Union in Los Angeles, the mere exiting from church by homosexuals is a cause for neighbors excitedly peeking from behind their blinds and drapes—het voyeurs looking at sexually defined persons, and getting their prurient kicks!

It is notable, both legally, morally and psychologically, that the attempt to restrain sexual "deviance" leads police to become voyeurs, and not, we suspect, against their deepest natural inclination. Young officers are assigned to spend long hours in men's toilets, presumably to prevent acts of fellation and importuning, while they keep a close watch on every exposed buttocks or peter. But then such officers, being pure men, derive no pleasure from such watching. No shit!

And what happens to the meek

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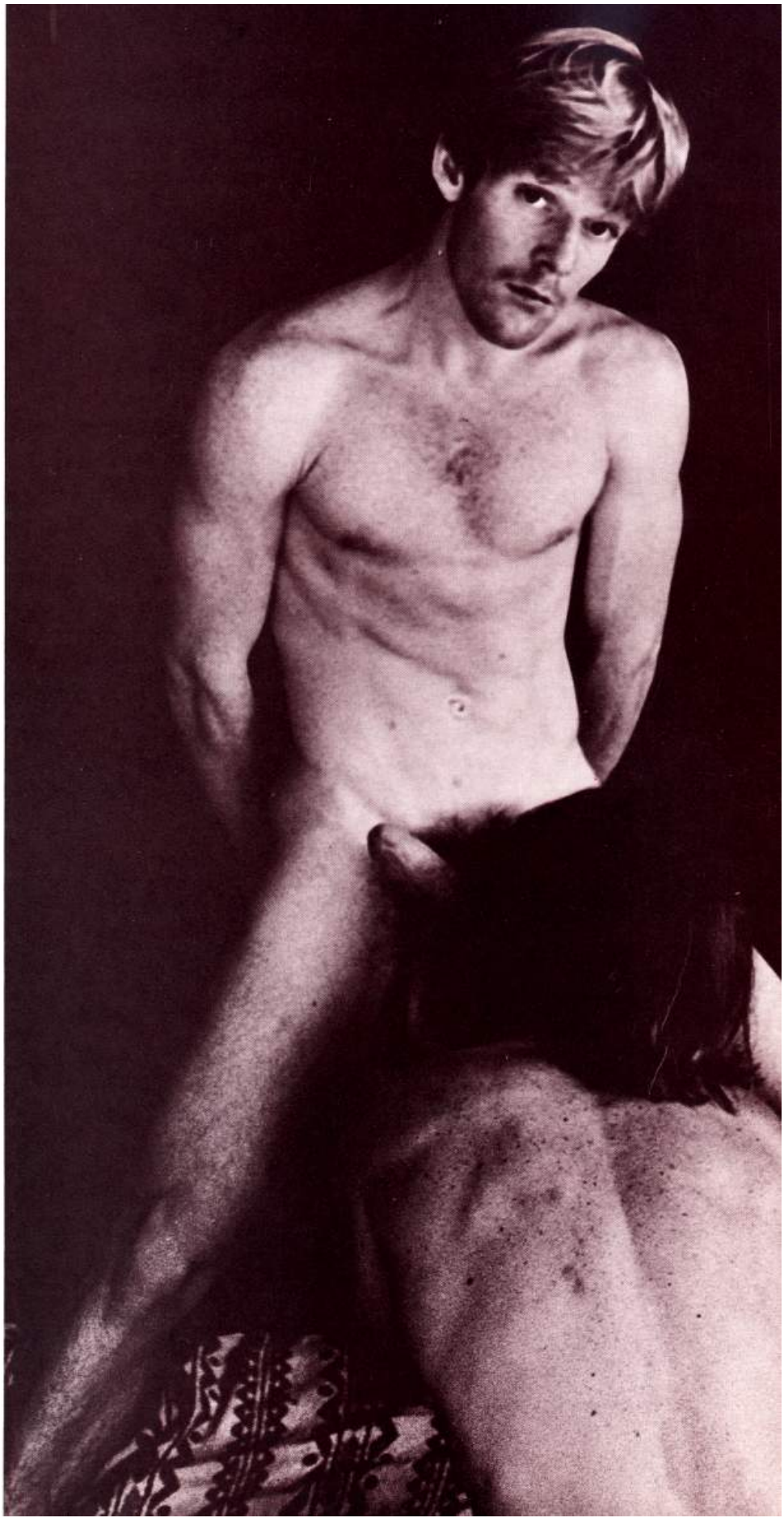

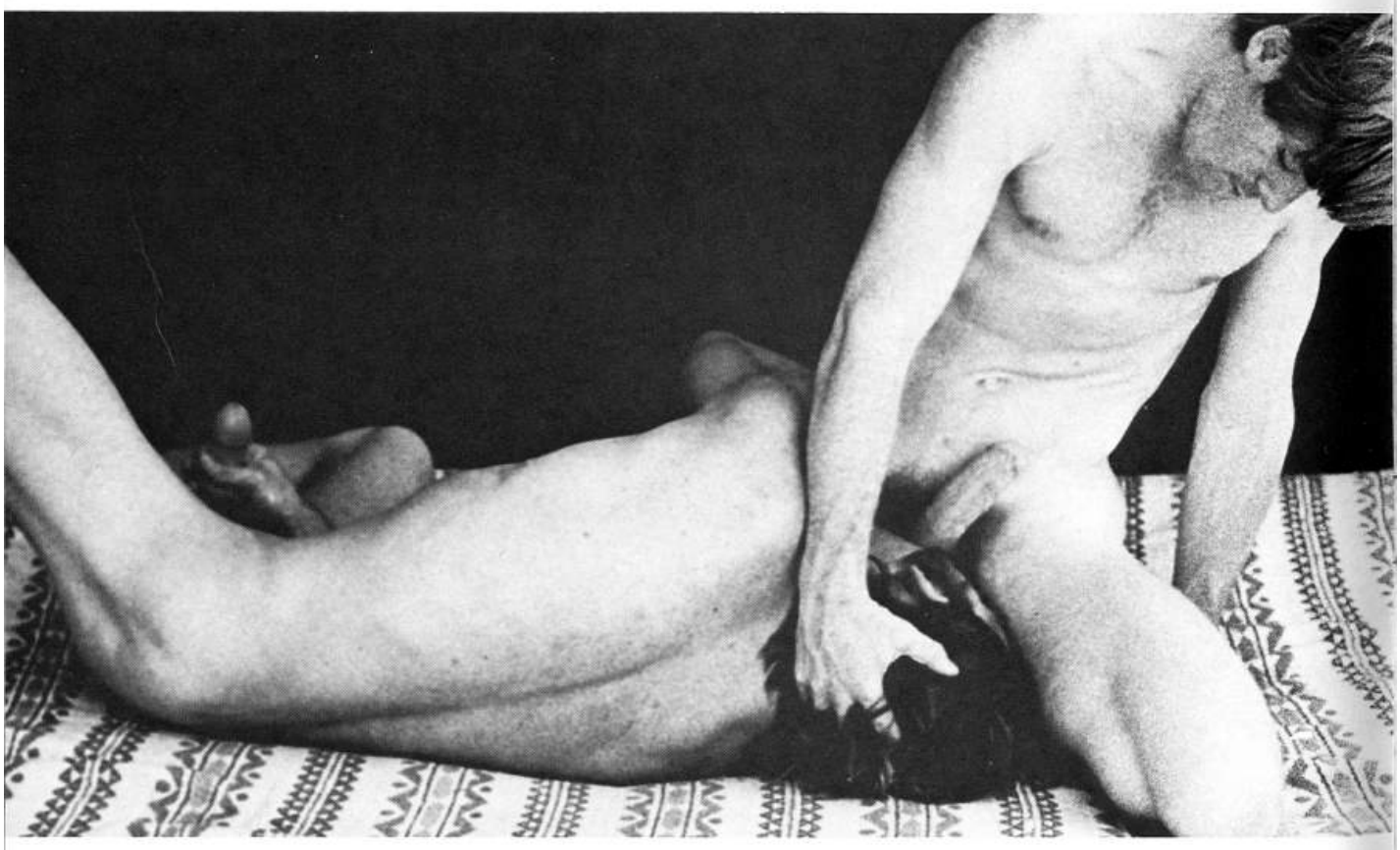

undressing in front of an open window for many years.

He was arrested by an officer who spent endless hours, the month prior to making the arrest, doing his own brand of professional peeking in men's restrooms, and spent his nights off following his own inclinations up the halls of the nearby YMCA.

The police captain who booked our victim was later removed from the force in a scandal involving shakedown of Gay and strippers'

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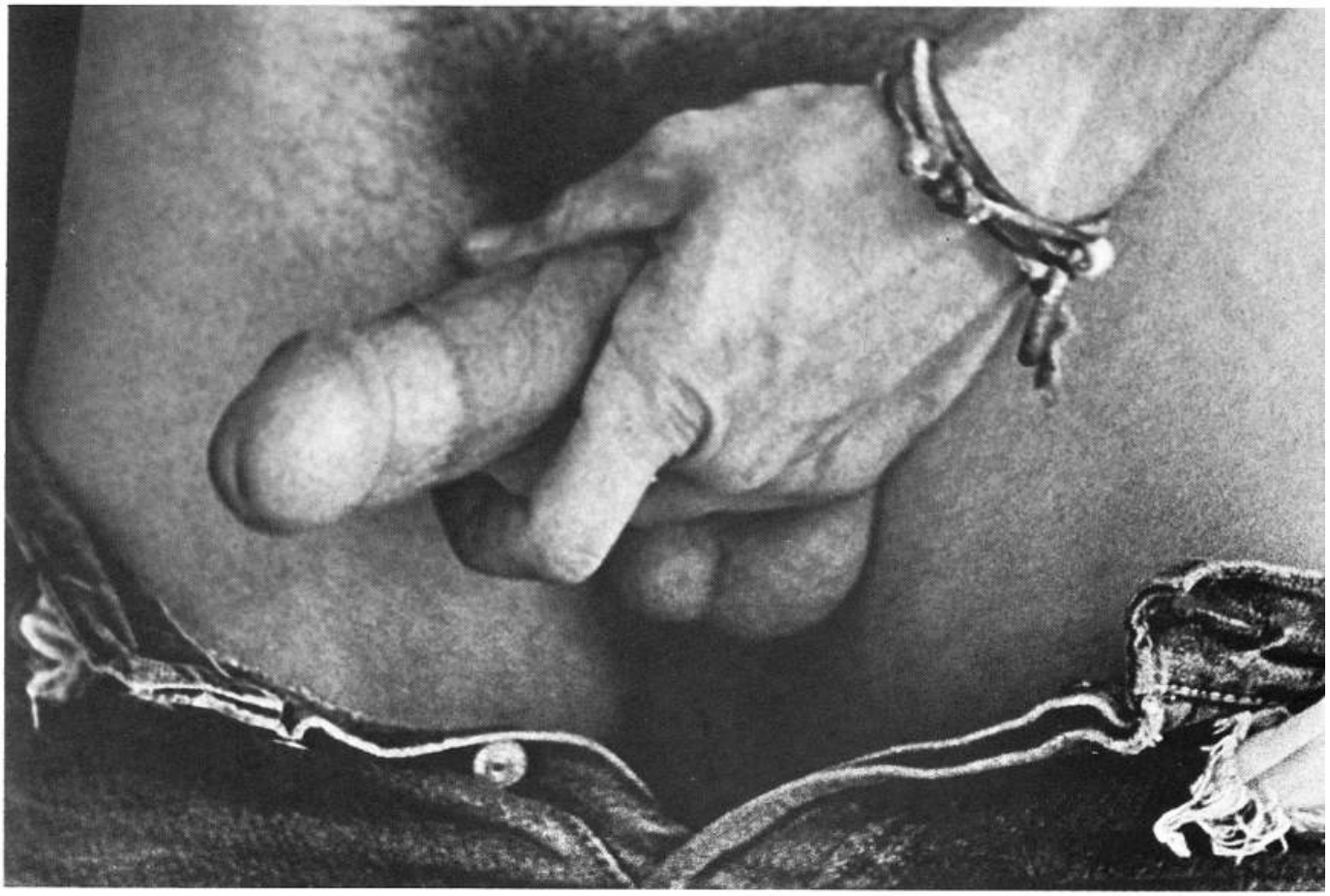
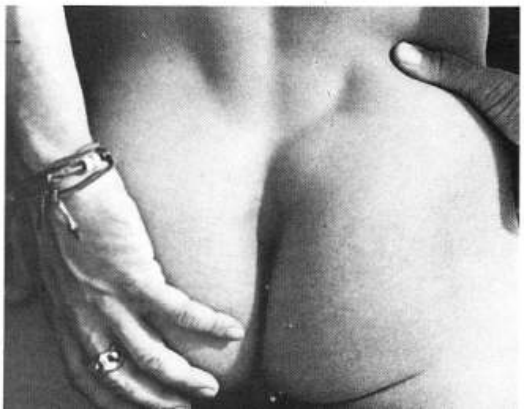
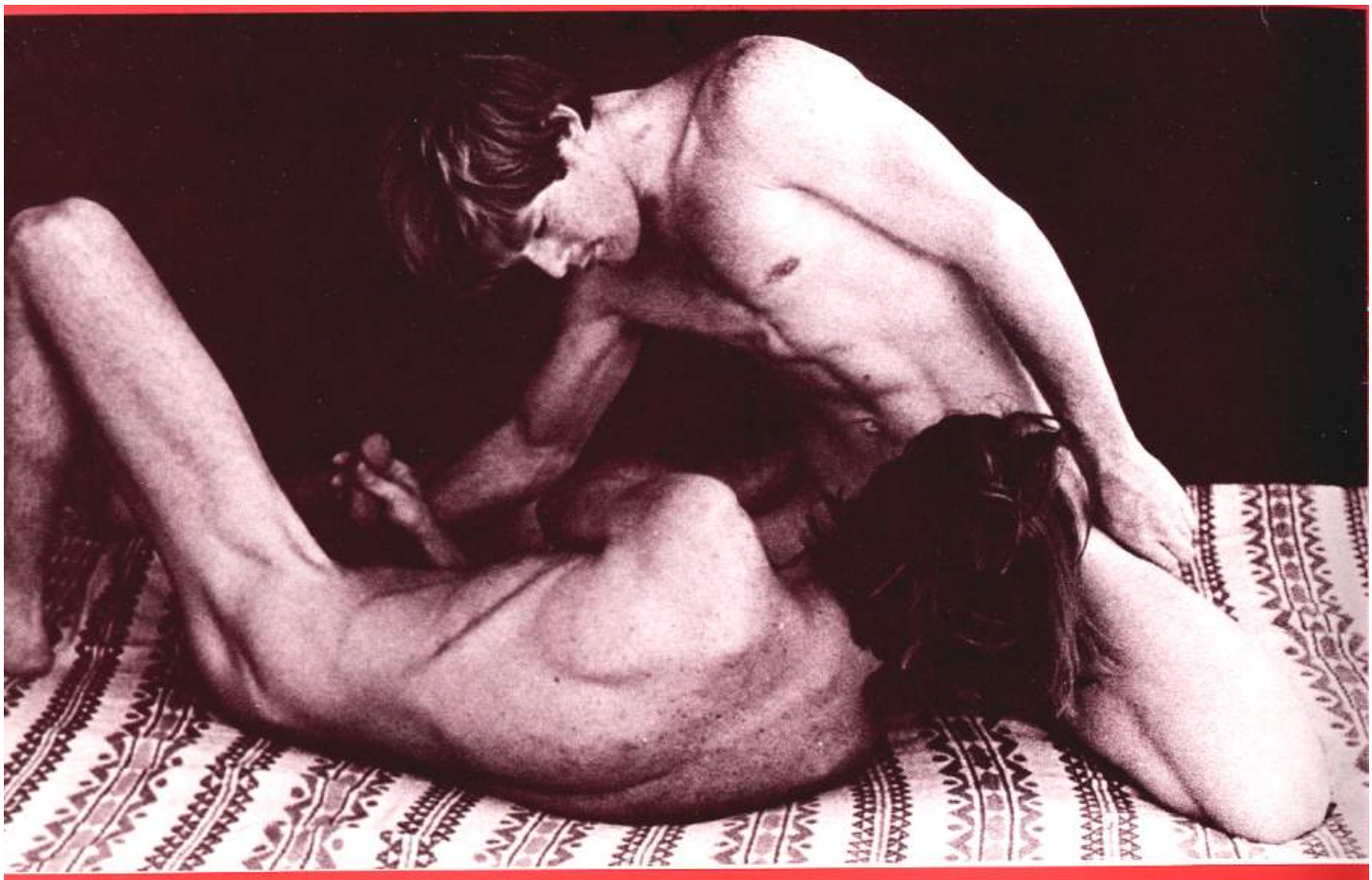
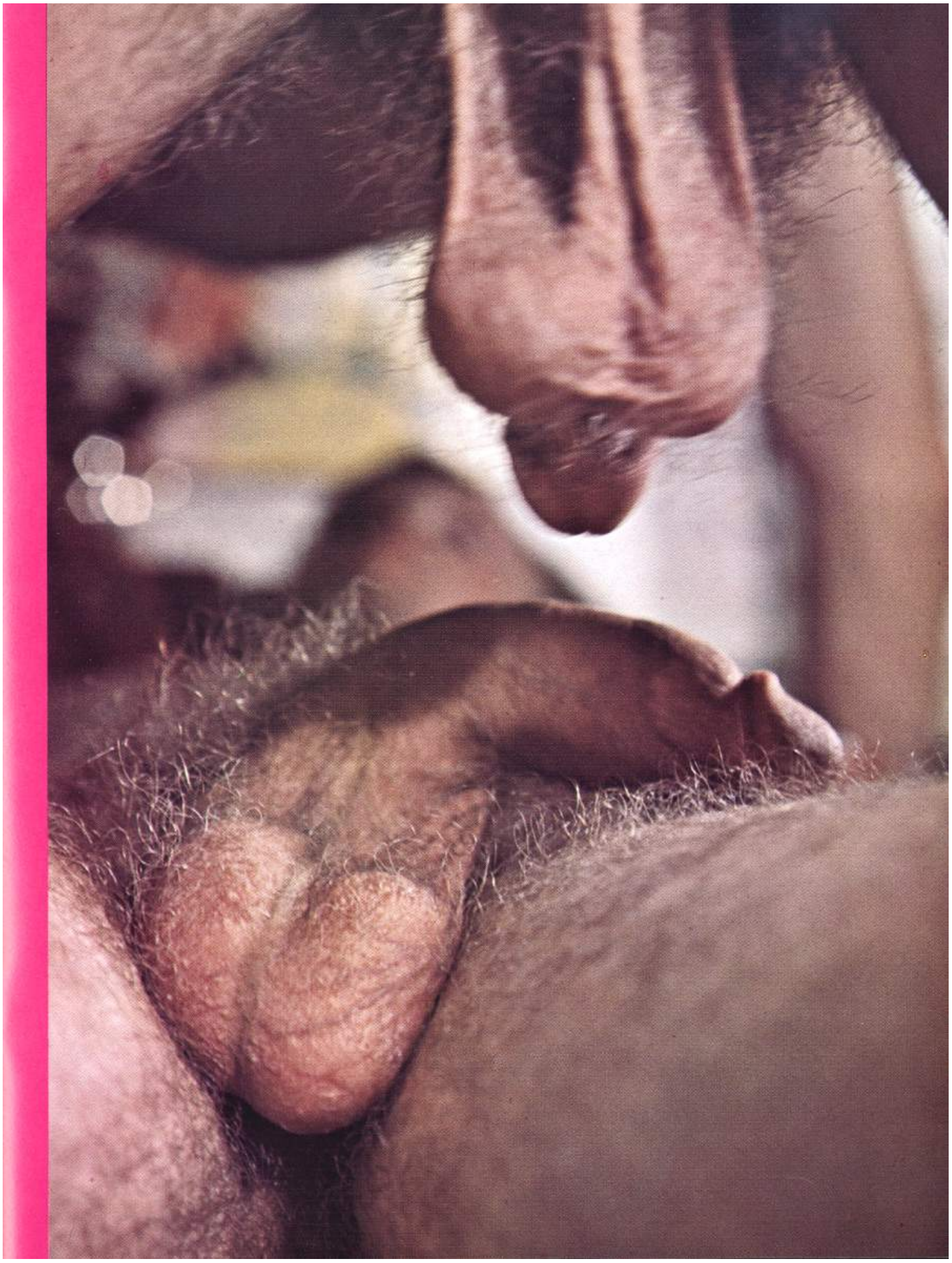


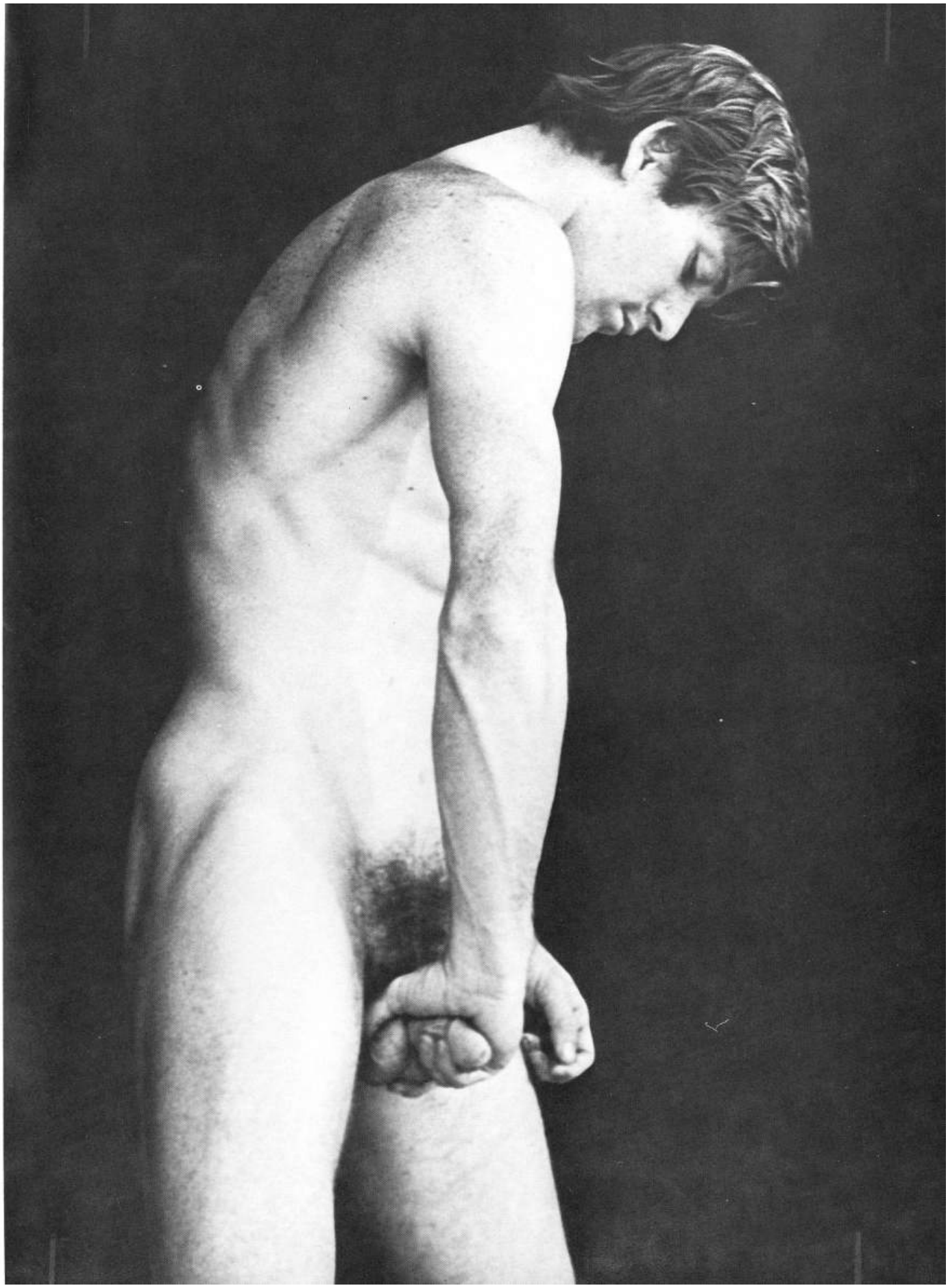
soul who is caught in the bushes, peeking into some woman's window?

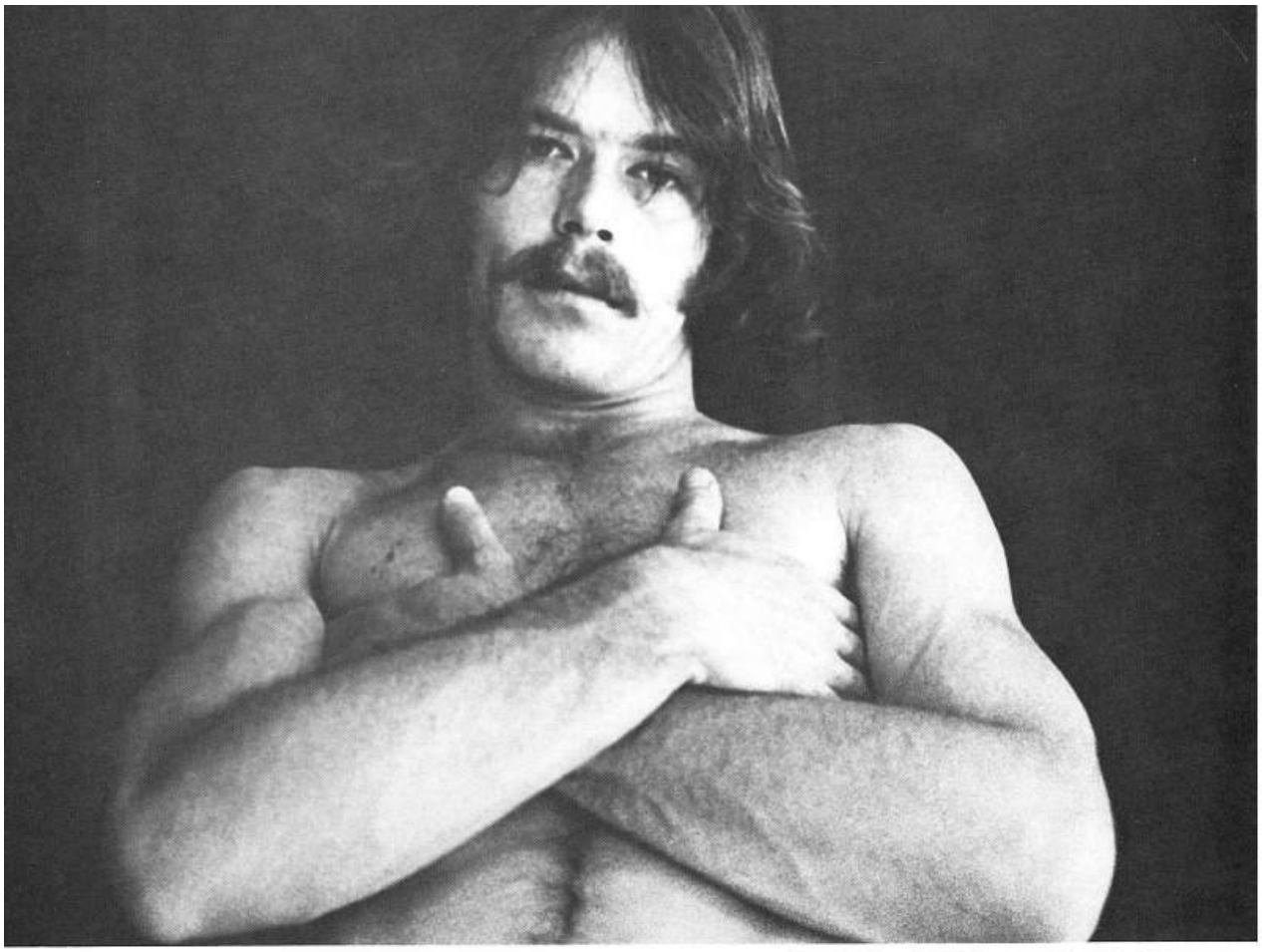
For this innocent act, he is sent to jail where he is subjected to brutal rape, eventually to come out disgraced and unemployable. In at least one case, the complaint was made by a woman whose sex life was, to say the least, not monogamous, and who, according to neighbors' complaints, had been











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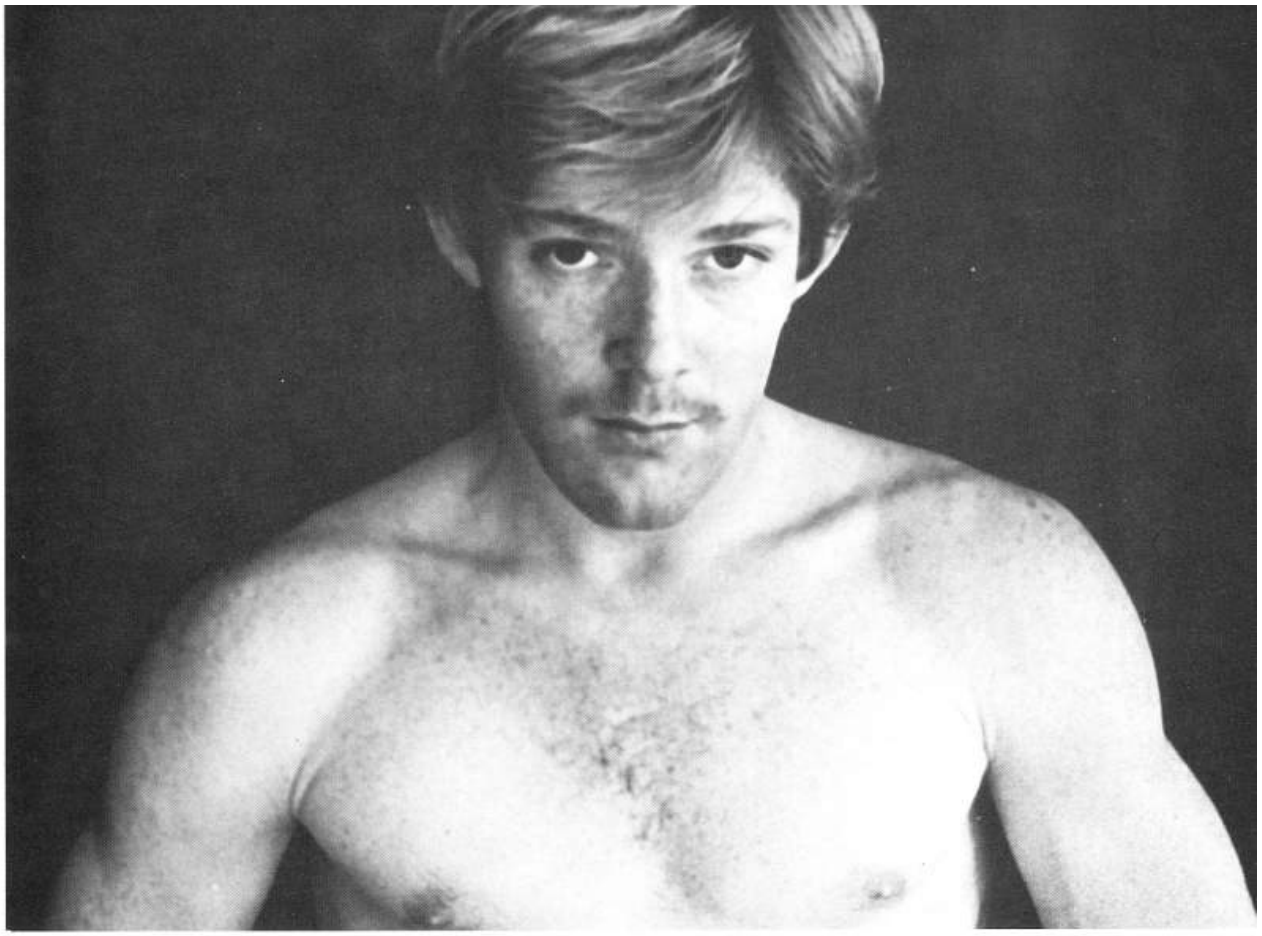

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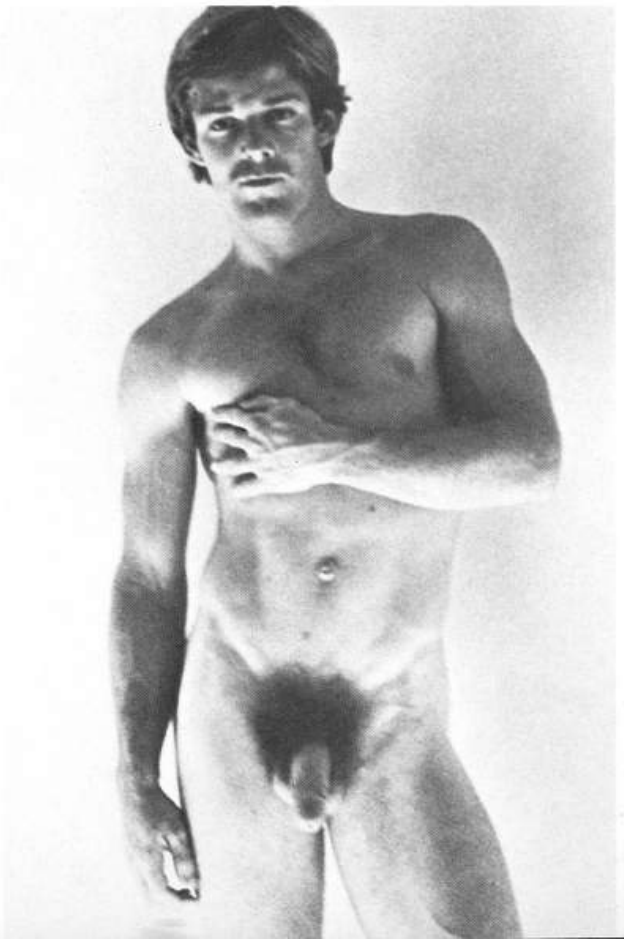
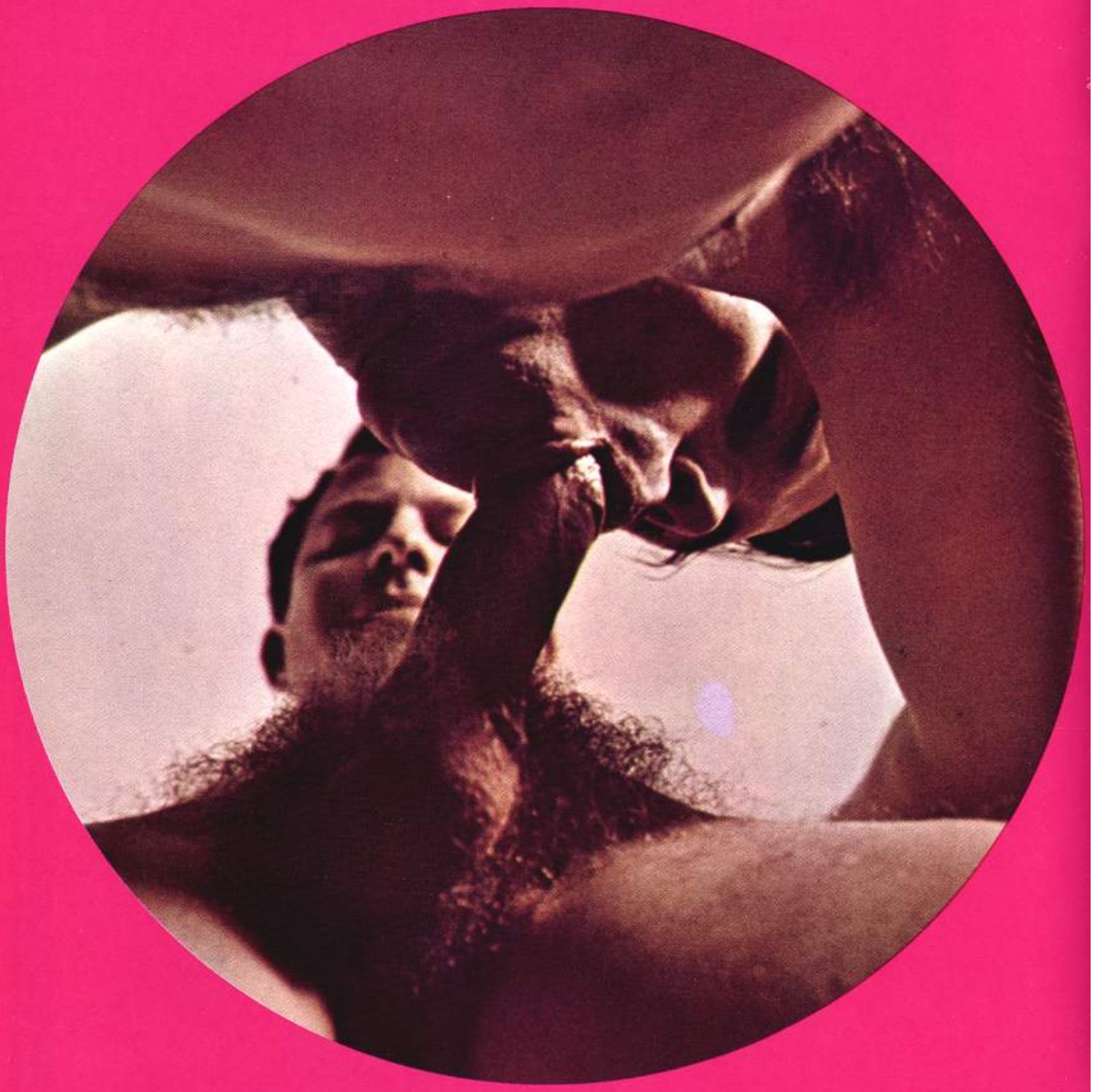
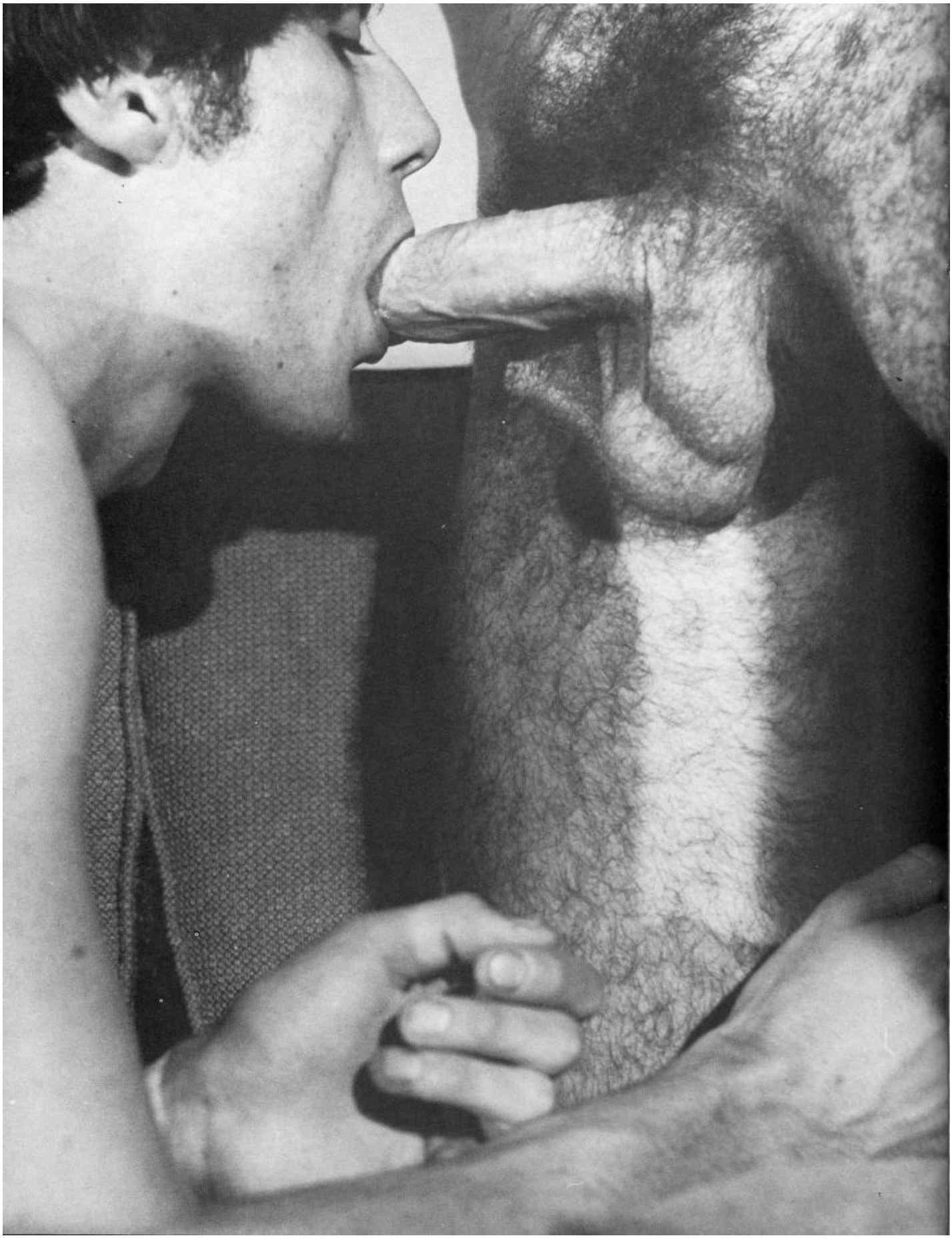
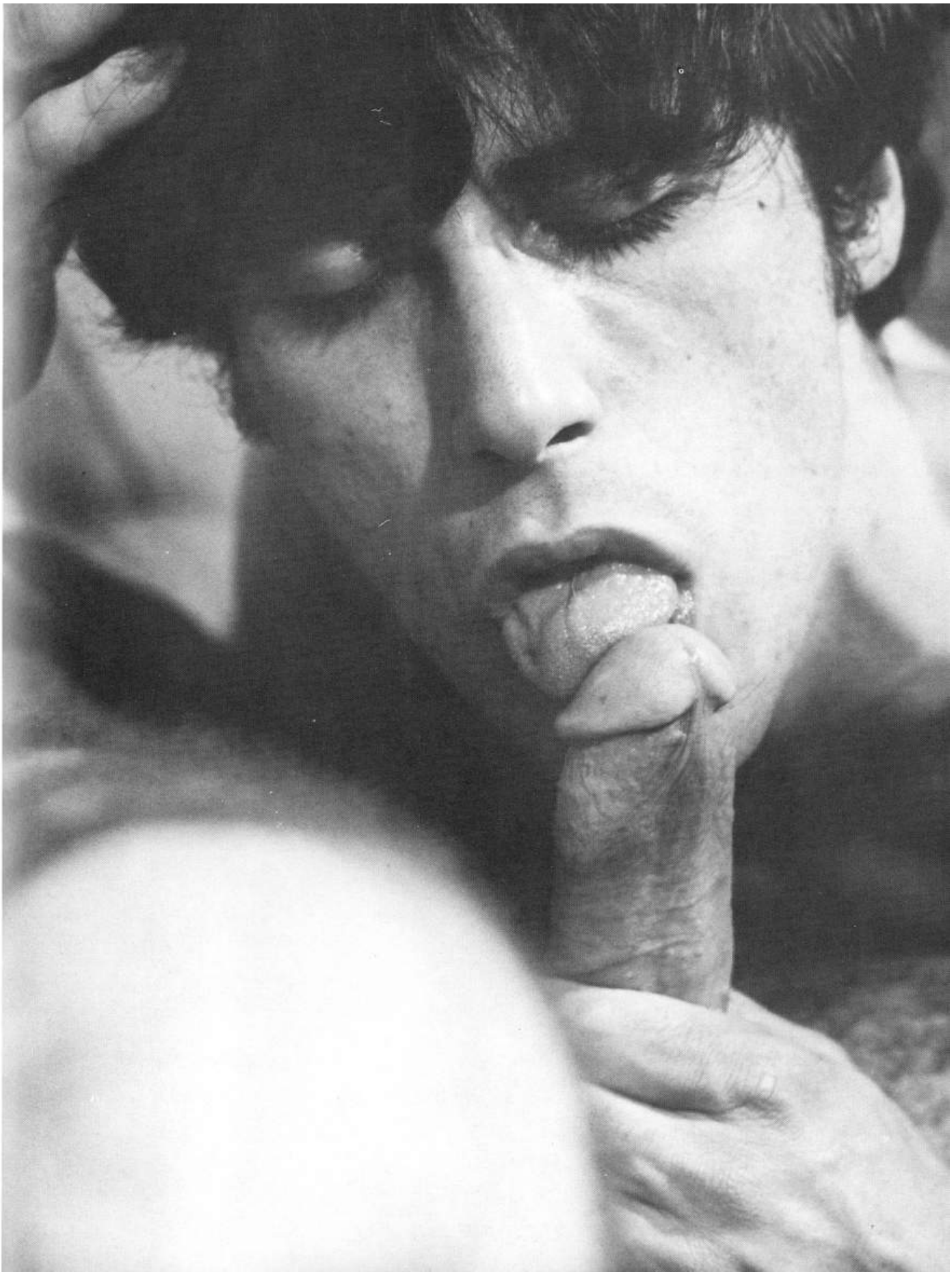








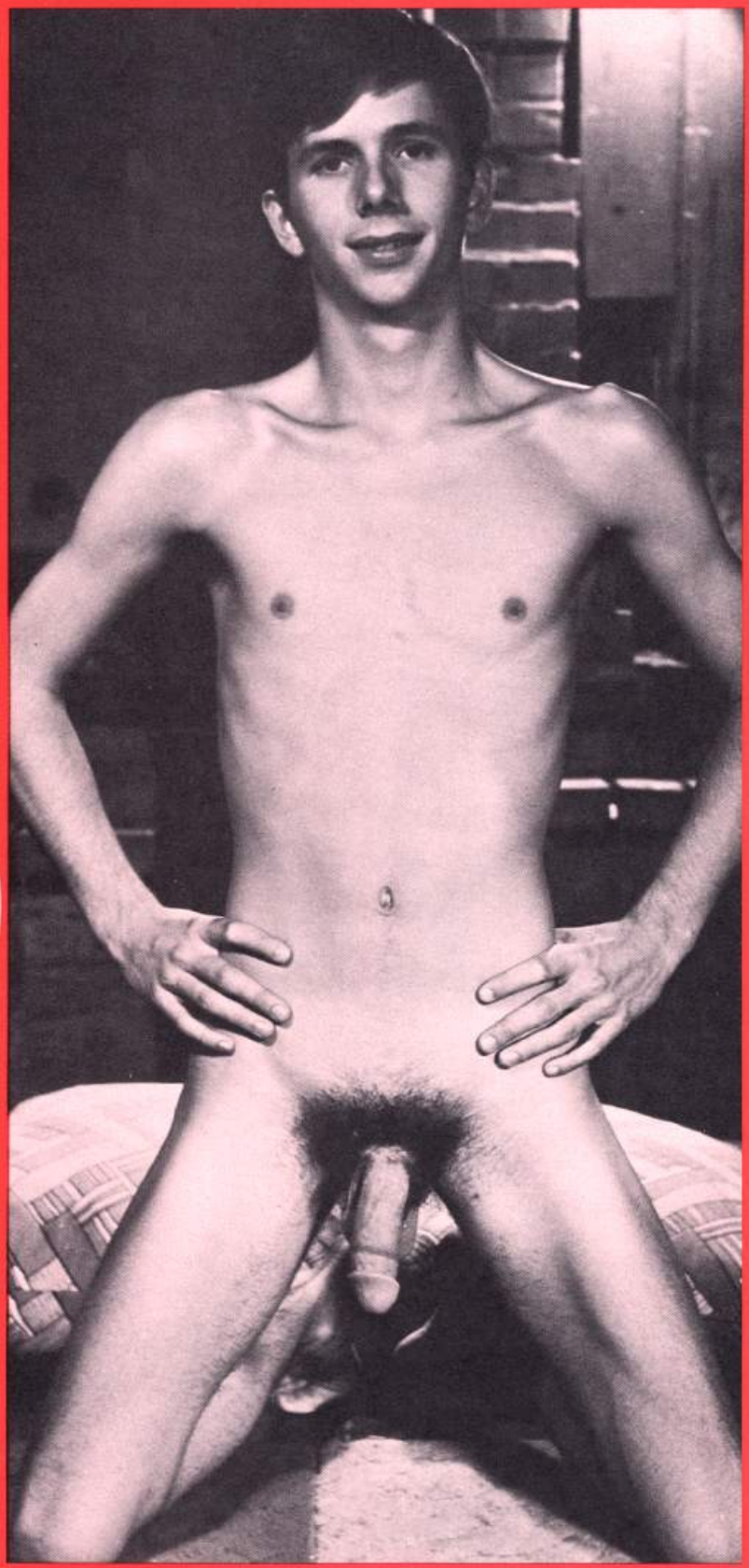
bars, and the keeping for his own use of a large batch of sexually explicit materials seized in a constitutionally illegal raid on an adult bookstore.

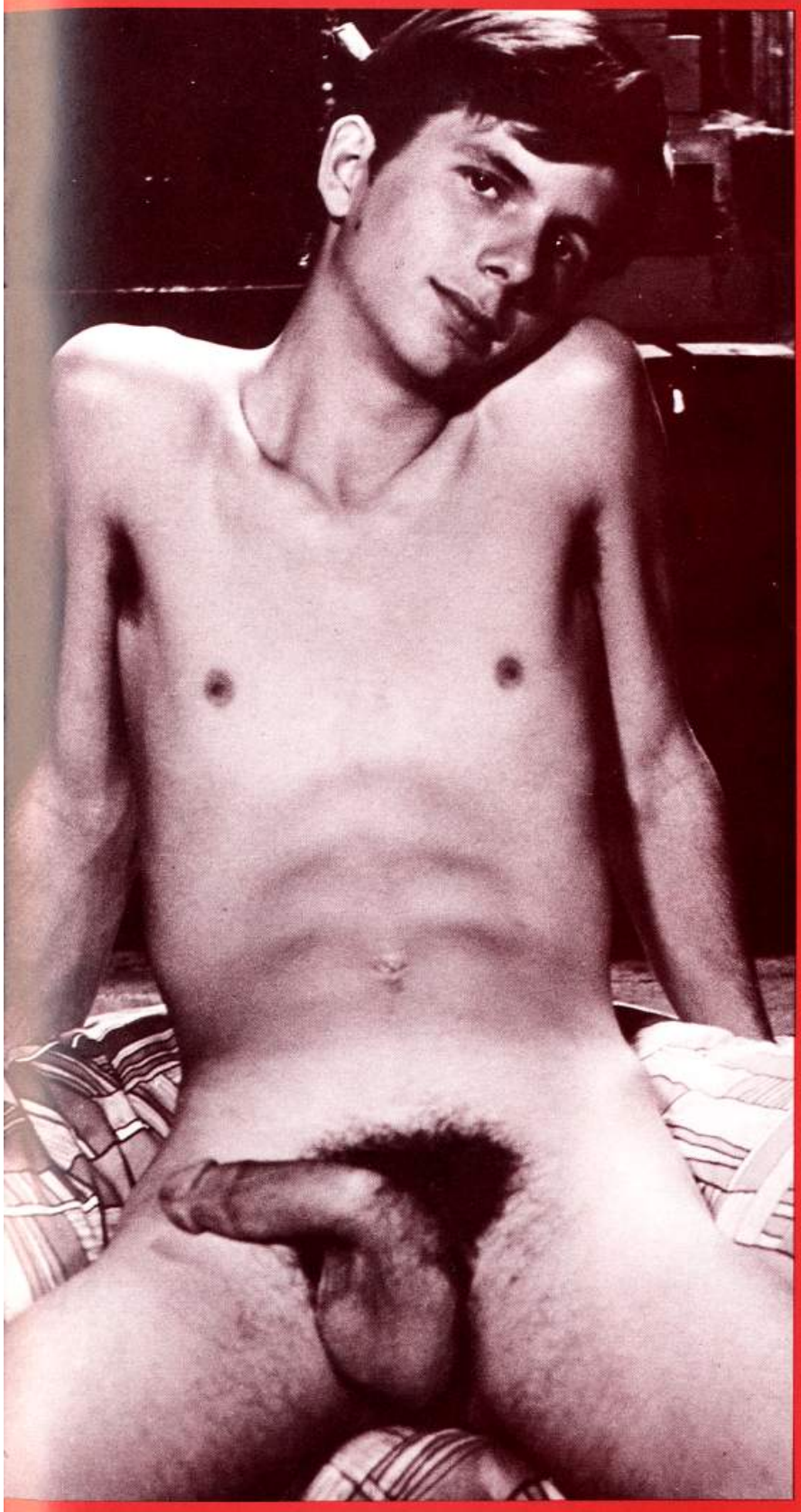
The attorney who defended him kept a telescope near his window to see what he could see late

ALAN

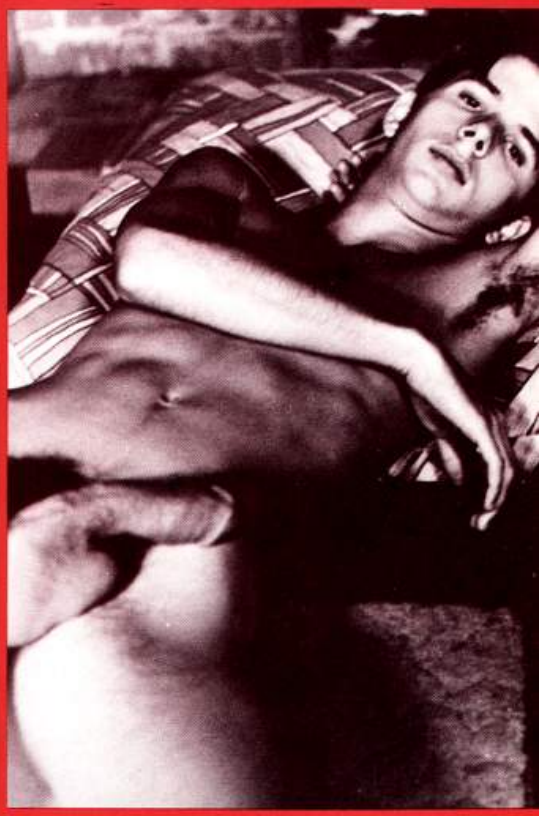
at night in the large apartment house across the street from his residence, and the attorney who prosecuted him was frequently seen at the old burlesque houses, and regularly ate lunch in recent years at "topless" restaurants, where waitresses frequently complained about how hard he pinched.

The judge who convicted him was present but not named in the newspapers when a stag-film party, complete with a live show (all heterosexual, of course), was raided at a local American Legion





headquarters, as a result of some political in-fighting on the city council in that town. I doubt that judge, jurors, attorneys or police really, honestly, said to themselves, when looking at the convicted peeker, "There, but for the grace of God, go I."



I might add that in confinement, the prisoner complained that the guards watched through the bars on several occasions when he was being raped by other prisoners.

As Jesus said, "Thou hypocrite, before thou canst pull out the mote which is in thy brother's eye, first pull out the beam in thine own eye."

The Most Universal Motif in Art

Puritans have not always been happy that the most universal

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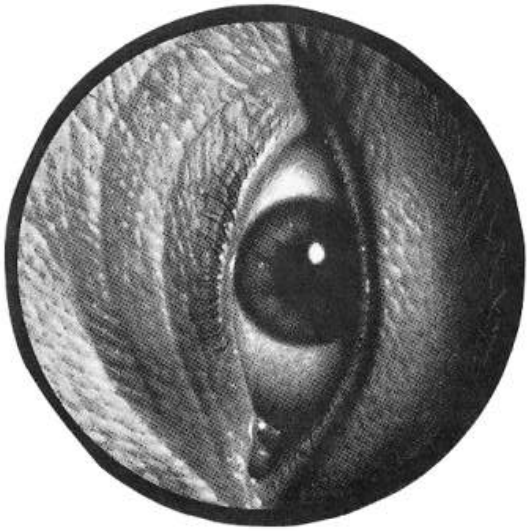
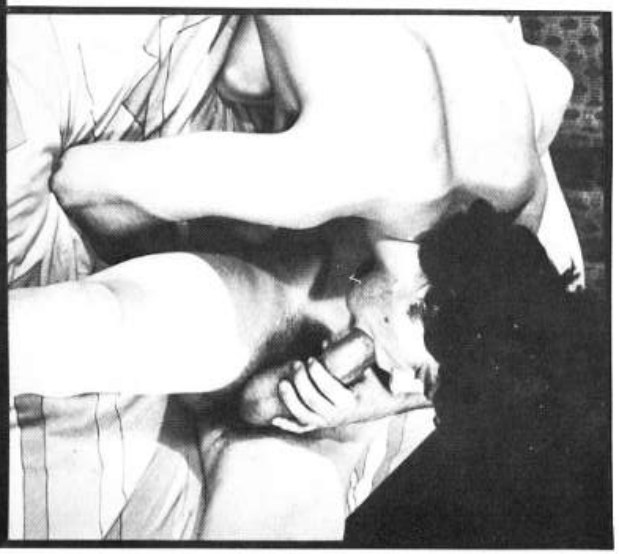


RICH & TOM



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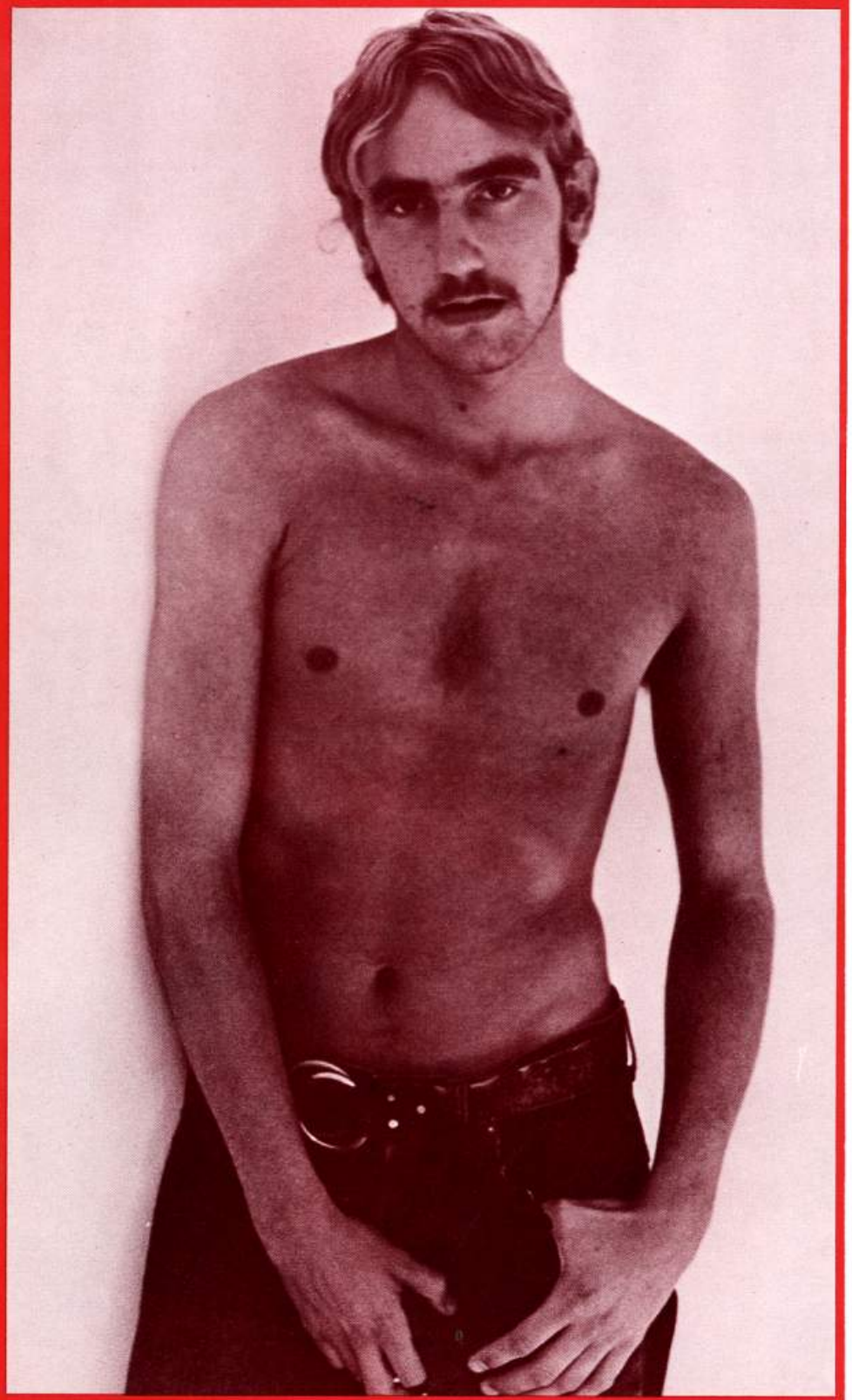


motif in art has been the nude human figure, often portrayed with the highest eroticism. And Christian religious art has not been exempt from this. From the endlessly popular paintings of the near nude, arrow-filled body of St. Sebastian, to Michaelangelo's David, to the near nude drawings of Adam and Eve being chased from Eden, or of Jesus being baptized and crucified, the lovely lines of the human body have been widely portrayed, though not with the frank sexuality of Indian temple art, the high idealism of classic Greek art, or the often comic sexuality of Incan clay figures.

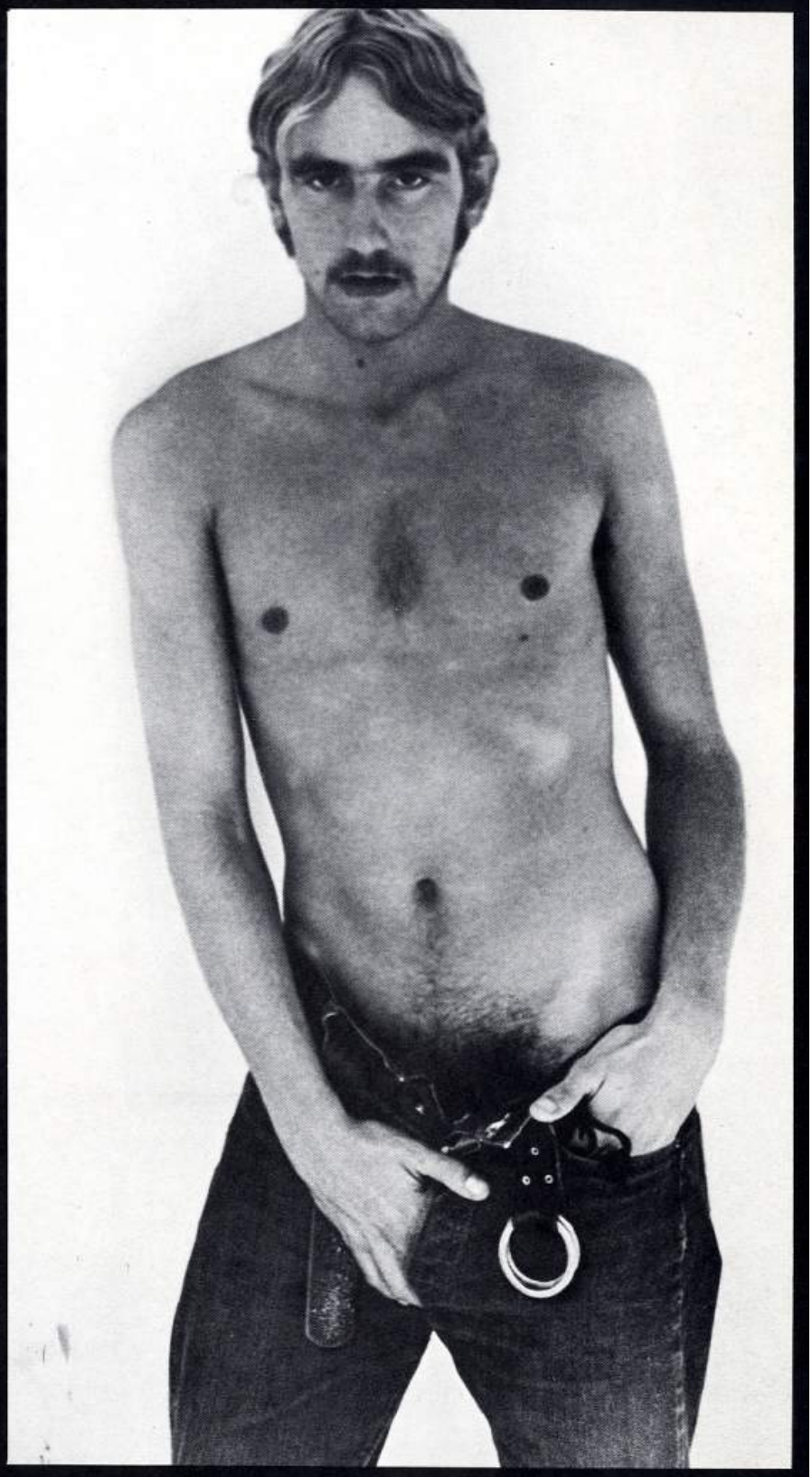
For the homosexual or the heterosexual, there are at times problems with getting it up, and any stimulus that works is worthwhile. There are other times when it is legitimately pleasurable to stimulate oneself without any immediate objective of coition, or of sodomy or fellatio.

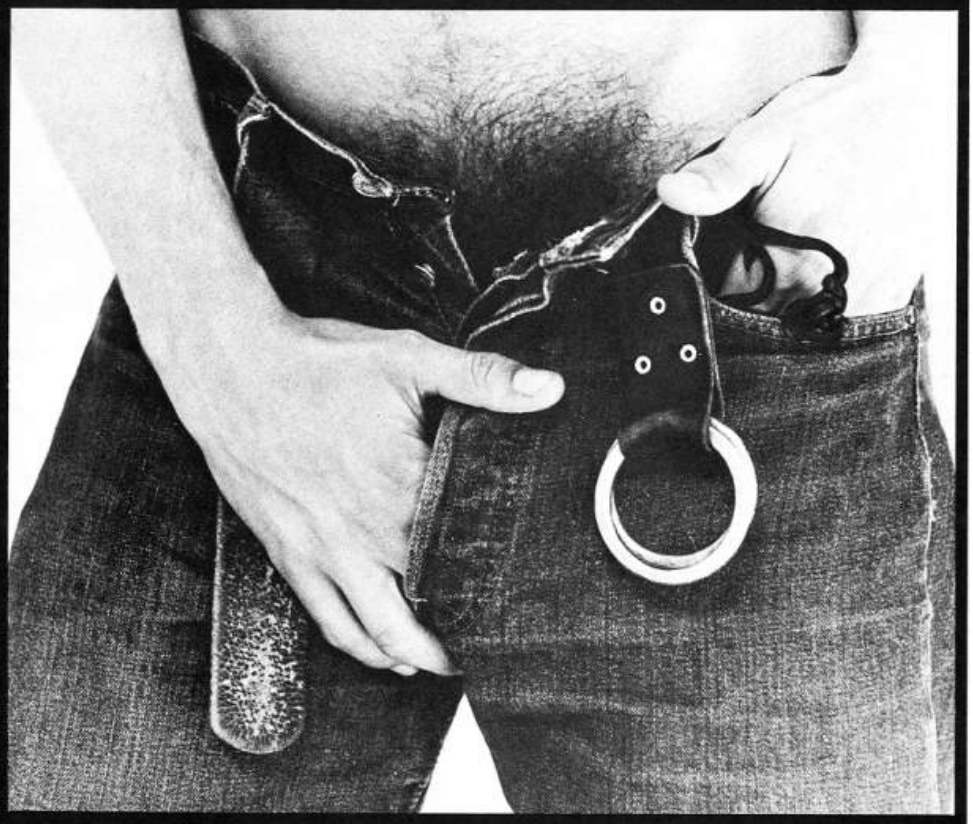
We are much keyed to the "hunger of the eyes," an appetite as worthy of fulfillment as any other.

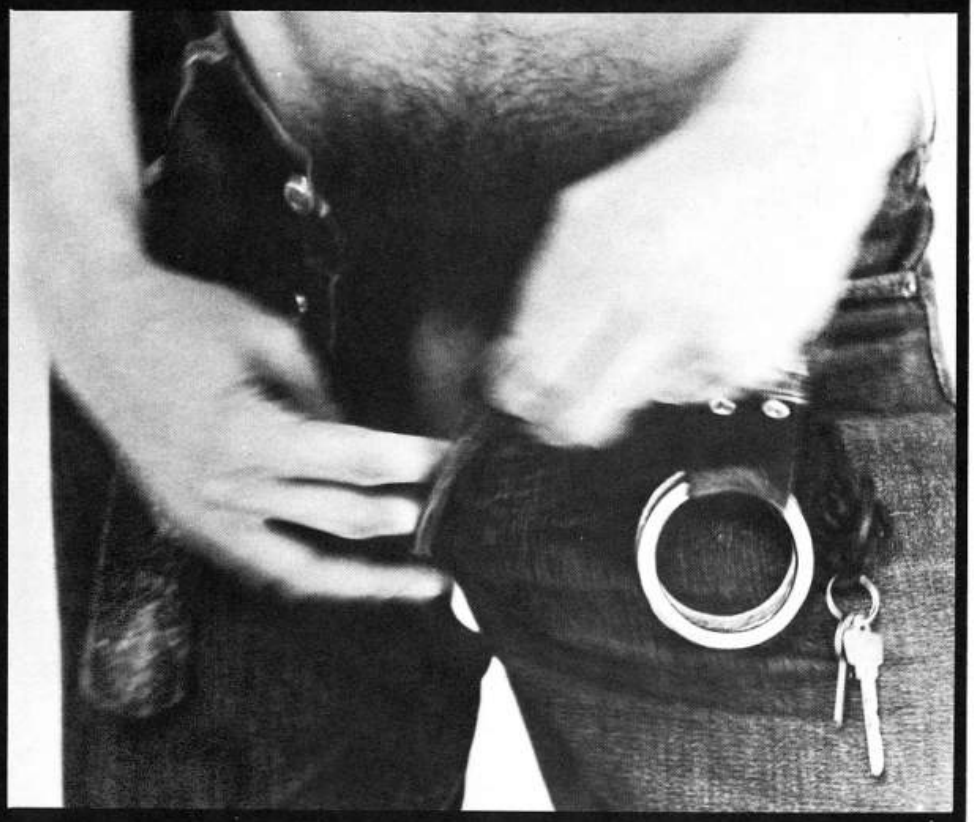
Thus we can now admit that to look, and to enjoy the act of looking, is not only not evil, it is good and natural and proper, and there is no reason whatever to be guilty or shameful about seeing any part of another person's body, or any natural functioning of that body, from sex to excretion.

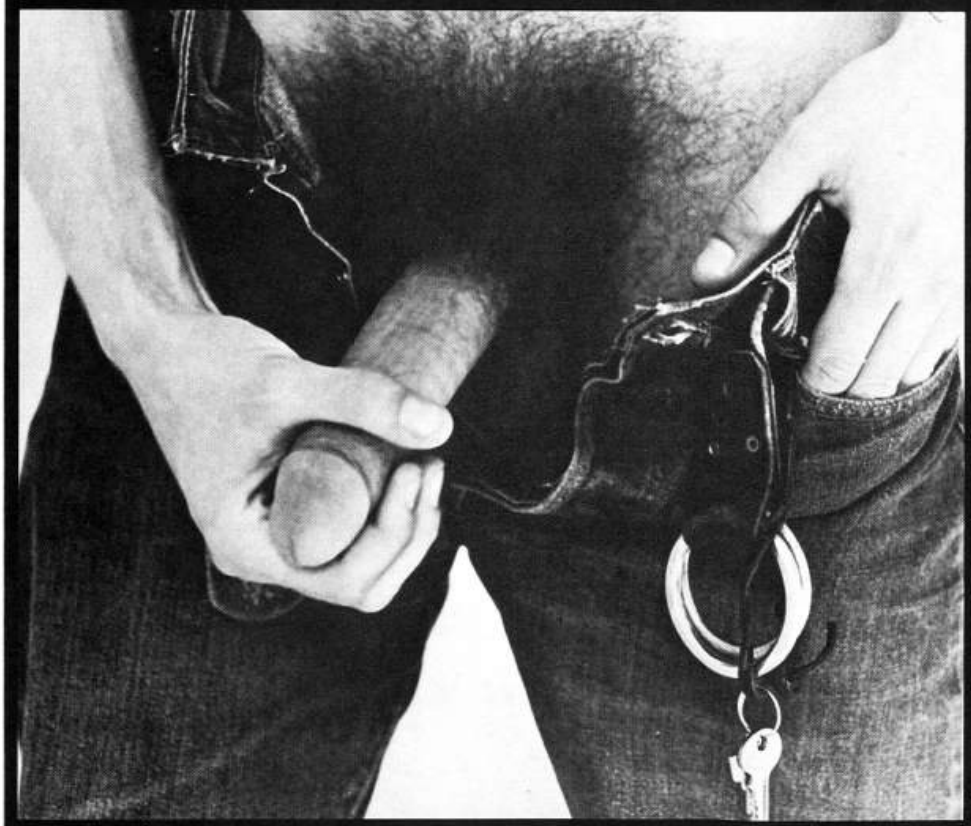
Moreover, the human body is at the root of human aesthetics, the standard by which all other beauty is measured. It was not pointlessly that both the ancient Greeks and the artists of the Renaissance, those great Gay artists, Michaelangelo and Leonardo, recognized the human body as the standard and measure from which architecture and science radiate out like the spokes of a wheel, that the proportions and structures of any good architecture must be related to the proportions and structures of the human body.

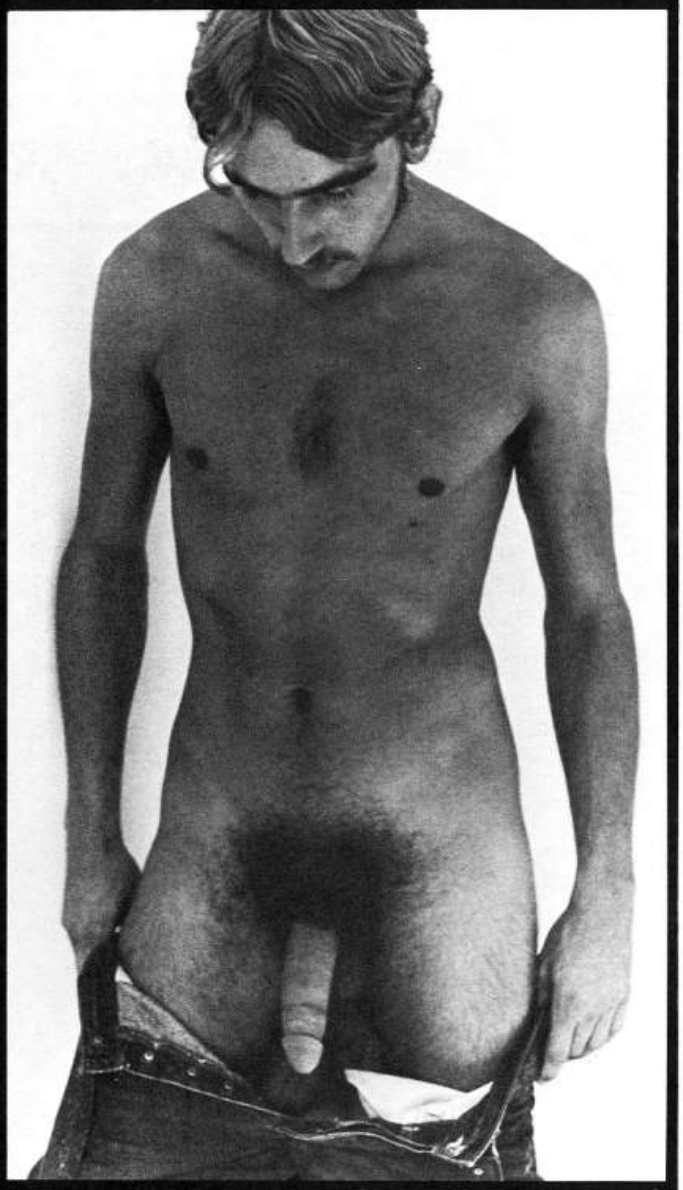
And so we come full circle to an aesthetic that is at the same time male and androgyne, to the love of the male form in all its glory, and in all its individual variability.

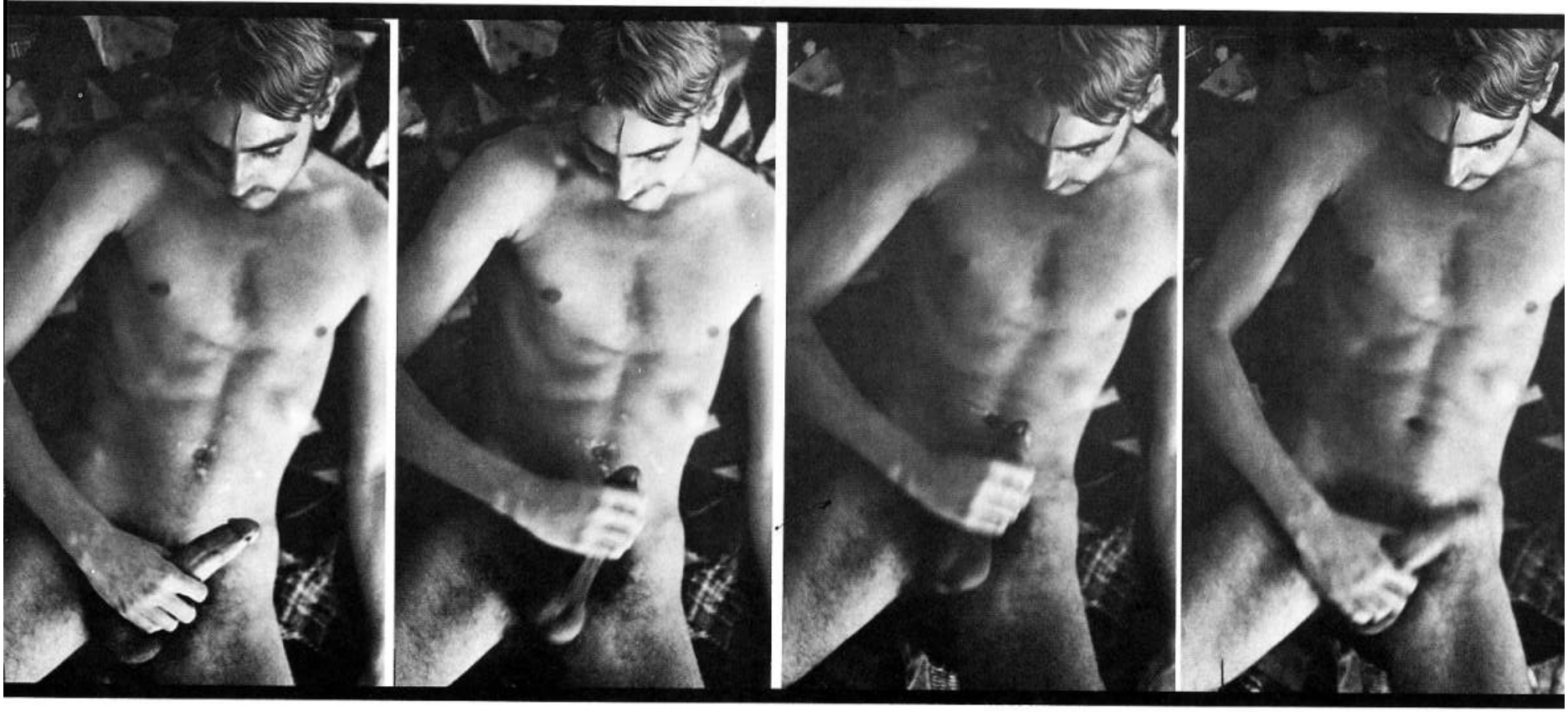


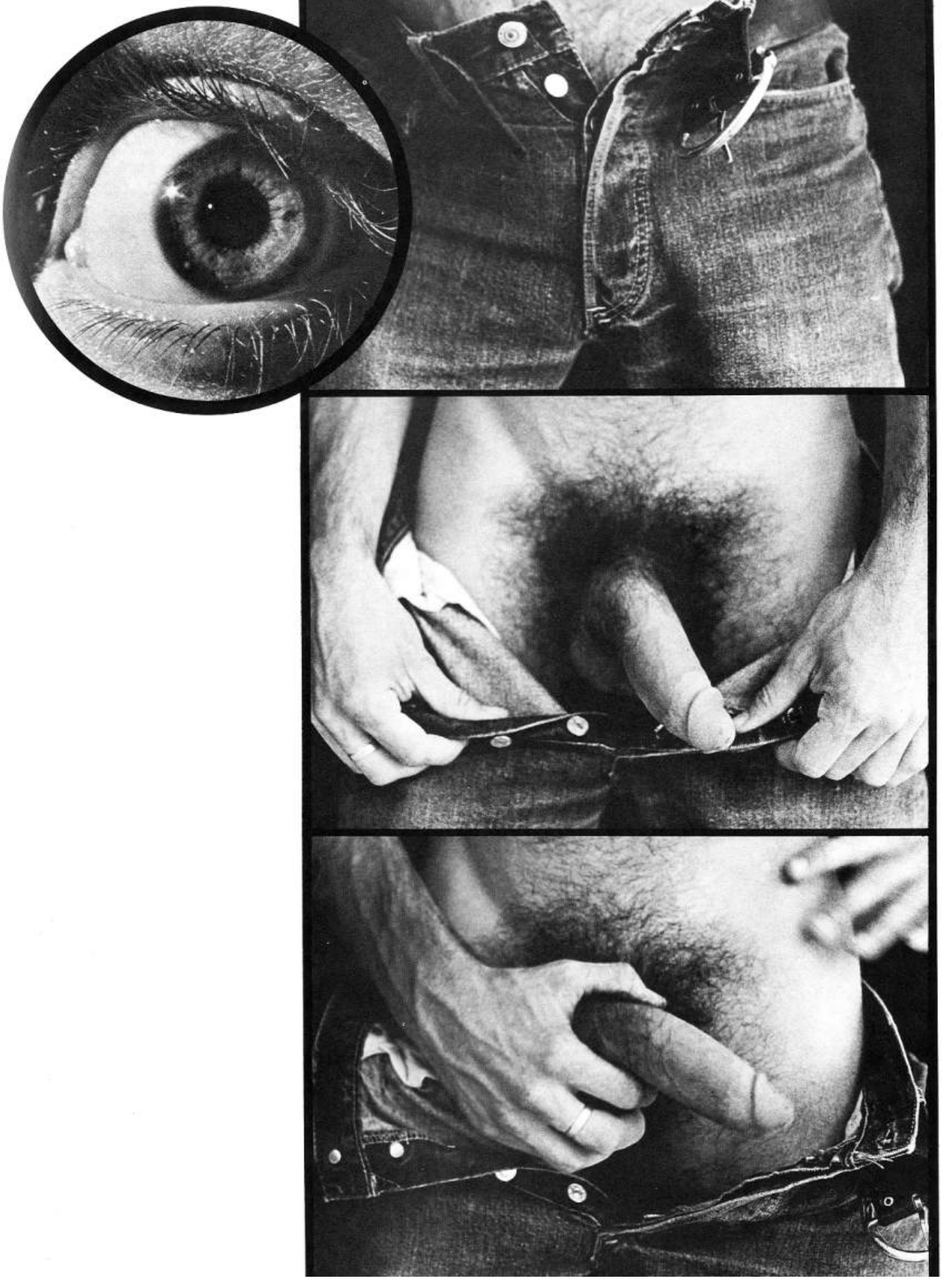












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